THE PALIN TRAP

THE Nation.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2008
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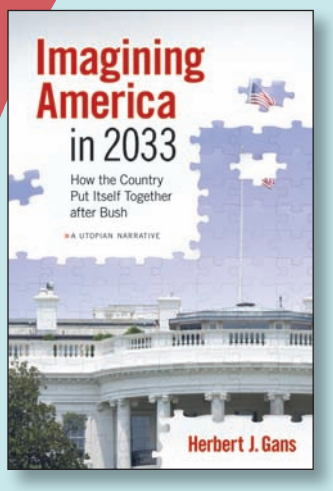

"Herbert Gans gives us a thoughtful and nuanced book-length speculation that shows a future America moving rationally and with goodwill to cope with its problems."

—Frances Fox Piven,
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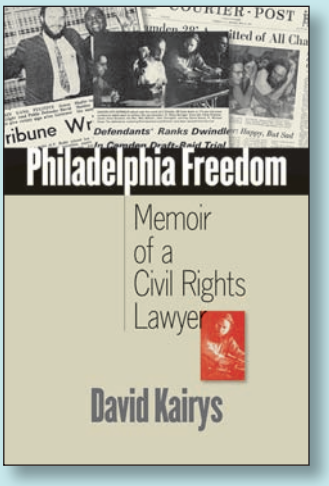

"David Kairys is one of the grand long-distance runners in the struggle for justice in America. His brilliant legal mind and superb lawyerly skills are legendary. This marvelous book is his gift to us!"

—Cornel West,
Princeton University, and author of *Race Matters*

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Letters

The Nation.
AN OPEN LETTER TO BARACK OBAMA
"CLASS CONFLICT & OLYMPIC REPRESSION IN CHINA"
Christian Parenti
Dave Zirin
ELVIS COSTELLO'S CRUEL WORLD
THE ECONOMIC CRISIS —AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT
FREE FALL
WILLIAM GREIDER

The Evil Twin Gets the Credit, Again

St. Paul, Minn.
OK, I know you'll get hundreds of letters about this, but those of us who live in St. Paul get pretty irate when the media say something happening here is in Minneapolis, as does your lead editorial "We'll Take It From Here" [Sept. 15]. We are two very different cities. The Republican National Convention was in St. Paul, Minnesota. The March on the RNC was in St. Paul, Minnesota. St. Paul is the capital of Minnesota. Minneapolis is across the Mississippi River—a nice place to visit, but…
Laurie Gray

Open Letters on Our Open Letter

Corning, N.Y.
In a fit of self-delusion, I signed your "Open Letter to Barack Obama" [Aug. 18/25]. But owing to the stands he has taken—from his vote on the unconstitutional FISA bill to his desire to expand Bush's faith-based initiatives, from his comments on NAFTA and the death penalty to his nonsense about offshore drilling—he represents little change and little hope. Instead of opposing the American empire, he promises to manage it better. As a corollary, instead of opposing a corrupt and oppressive political and economic system, he promises to manage it better. If Obama will say almost anything to get elected, why pretend that a thoughtful and reasonable letter such as yours could affect him? I'm baffled by my having signed your letter.
Michael Beykirch

Bellingham, Wash.
I am 65 and consider this the most important election of my life. We have an opportunity to elect a President whose values represent what is best in our nation. Obama comes from a unique background and has a unique intellect with the street sense to get elected and to turn the ship of state in a new direction.

I ask that all of us unite to fully support Obama and the other Democrats running in this election. It is not a good time to harass Obama and other Democrats, who face a difficult and important election. We may not agree with them on all issues, and we must continue our efforts in support of those issues. But we should not attempt to force our candidates to run their campaigns on our pet issues.
Karl Kleeman

Bedford, Mass.
I think you are pushing much too hard on this rare and wonderful candidate. He, and all of us, find ourselves in a truly dirty fight. The senator needs all the support we can give him. He has quite enough to handle.
Barbara Mercer

Rochester, N.Y.
I read your Open Letter. Well done. But remember, if we want change and to leave the Republican disaster behind, we must allow Obama to be more moderate. I hope the left has the courage, decency, intelligence and political savvy to grant Obama some flexibility until after the election. Let's not ruin the show by being too ideological.
Malahat Bahreman

Labor's Helping Hand

Hong Kong
Christian Parenti's incisive "Class Struggle in the New China" [Aug. 18/25] is incorrect on one point. Regarding Chinese labor activist Han Dongfang's 1992 visit to the United States for urgent medical treatment following his release from a Beijing prison, Parenti writes, "But the US labor movement took an interest in his case, and the Service Employees International Union managed to bring Han to New York, where he was treated and had one lung removed."

In fact, it was Human Rights Watch that brought Han to the United States, in September 1992, and Lane Kirkland of the AFL-CIO kindly provided union funds for his treatment and medication. As Human

(continued on page 22)

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Backward Bailout

George W. Bush may be a disappearing lame duck, but he is not through doing damage to the Republic. His half-baked rescue of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac leaves another stink bomb on the Oval Office desk for the next President. Bush left the heavy lifting to Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, a Wall Street guy who naturally fashioned a Wall Street–friendly deal: get the public's money but don't make any promises.

EDITORIAL

In this case the taxpayers are on the hook for some $100 billion for each of the failing mortgage giants. The deal stinks because it doesn't really solve anything. Fannie and Freddie executives got sacked, but nothing substantial was changed in the weirdly illegitimate structure of these private, profit-making corporations sponsored by the federal government. Instead of acting decisively, the Treasury basically opened the public's wallet and promised to spend whatever it takes to keep the companies upright. "Conservatorship" is a fiction. The taxpayers own these two high-flying turkeys in all but name because they are now picking up the tab.

A real solution to this mess is not complicated: wipe out the corporations and nationalize them, buy out the shareholders for pennies on the dollar and restore Fannie Mae to its original status as a federal housing agency (maybe merged with Freddie). Its functions involve vital public services—supporting the flow of mortgage financing, encouraging broader homeownership and subsidizing construction of low-income housing. These public goods do not much interest private financiers unless they can harvest rip-and-run profits, which is exactly what they did, with their usurious lending in the subprime mortgage scandal.

Paulson and other Washington players are focused instead on "investor sentiment," that is, trying to halt the panicky flight of major creditors. If other nations join China in selling off their Fannie/Freddie portfolios, the credit crunch will become a deadly stranglehold. This is the reality of our debtor nation's dependence on supposed rivals, who are propping up America by lending to us. If they decide to stop, Uncle Sam is screwed.

Instead of rescuing financial losers, the government ought to be devoting its heaviest resources to jump-starting the real economy. Instead of bailing out the money guys who caused this crisis, Washington should concentrate on bolstering enterprise, employment and productive investment.

Washington has got it backward. The financial system will not get well and return to normal lending until the economy regains its natural vigor. Bankers' fright is sure to deepen as more firms fail; witness the tottering Lehman Brothers. Given the depth of this crisis, only the government has the ability to provide the needed stimulus, by spending money on real economic activity—programs that create new jobs and incomes, production and profit.

Does Barack Obama or John McCain understand this? Neither candidate has acknowledged the enormity of what's facing the country or explained the dire implications with clarity and frankness, much less described plausible solutions. McCain is hopeless, mouthing right-wing bromides about corporate tax cuts and smaller government. Obama has said useful things about financial reforms and has supported some infrastructure funding, but he too has lacked the courage to tell the hard truth about the ditch the country is in and how to get us out. Obama's limited comments suggest he sees the crisis much the way Washington does. That won't be good enough if he becomes President—though a deepening crisis may force him to take bolder action.

Whatever the two candidates claim to believe now, one of them is going to get walloped in January when he enters the Oval Office.

Page 23: An inky, well-paneled place

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VOLUME 287, NUMBER 9, SEPTEMBER 29, 2008
PRINTED SEPTEMBER 10

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INTERNET: Selections from the current issue become available Thursday night at www.thenation.com.

Printed on 100% recycled 40% post-consumer acid- and chlorine-free paper, in the USA.

This week at thenation.com

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With Laura Flanders

NATION POLL

How best to strike back at Palin?

WEB LETTERS

Express yourself

Our Polar Bears, Ourselves

It wasn't much noticed at the time, but three weeks before she was chosen as John McCain's vice presidential running mate, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin played a key supporting role in the latest episode of the Bush Administration's eight-year war on the Endangered Species Act, one of the cornerstones of American environmental law. On August 4 Alaska sued the government for listing the polar bear as a "threatened" species, an action, the lawsuit asserted, that would harm "oil and gas…development" in the state. In an accompanying statement, Palin complained that the listing "was not based on the best scientific and commercial data available" and should be rescinded.

COMMENT

The Bush Administration had not wanted to designate the polar bear as threatened in the first place; now Palin's lawsuit provided cover to backtrack on the decision. The Interior Department had issued the listing only after environmental groups filed two lawsuits, and the courts ordered compliance. While the polar bear population was currently stable, the plaintiffs argued, greenhouse gas emissions were melting the Arctic ice that polar bears rely on to hunt seals, their main food source. A study by the US Geological Survey supported this argument, concluding that two-thirds of all polar bears could be gone by 2050 if Arctic ice continues to melt as scientists project. The listing was the first time global warming had been cited as the sole premise in an Endangered Species Act case, and Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne clearly wanted it to be the last. When Kempthorne announced the polar bear listing on May 14, he emphasized that it would not affect federal policy on global warming or block development of "our natural resources in the Arctic."

A week after Palin's lawsuit, Kempthorne delivered on that pledge. On August 11 he proposed new rules that could allow federal agencies to decide for themselves whether their actions will imperil a threatened or endangered species. The rule reverses precedent: since passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, scientists from the Fish and Wildlife Service have made such determinations independent of the agency involved. Under the new rule, if the Army Corps of Engineers is building a dam, the corps can decide whether it is putting species at risk. To make sure no one missed the point, Kempthorne told reporters that the new rule, which he termed "a narrow regulatory change," would keep the Endangered Species Act from becoming "a back door" to making climate change policy.

Hated by the right wing as an infringement on property rights, the Endangered Species Act has been on Bush's hit list since the beginning of his presidency, when he chose Gale Norton as his first Interior Secretary. A Republican woman of the West like Palin, Norton assailed the act and did all she could to undermine it. "The Bush Administration has listed only sixty species as threatened or endangered, compared with 522 under Clinton and 231 under the first President Bush," says Noah Greenwald, science director of the Center for Biological Diversity, the lead plaintiff in the polar bear case. "And it took a court order to make each of those sixty listings happen."

Kempthorne's proposal nevertheless seems likely to go forward. An obligatory thirty-day period for public comment ex-

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Noted.

BEHIND THE SURGE: Reading **Bob Woodward**'s *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006–2008* is like reading raw transcripts of documents and interviews from a sensational murder trial: you know what happens, and you know who the victim and the perpetrator are. But to read their actual words is chilling. It's the *In Cold Blood* of national security journalism.

Woodward gives us some juicy tidbits: that the United States spied on Iraqi Prime Minister **Nuri al-Maliki**, that a supersecret high-tech assassination program killed large numbers of militants beginning in May 2006 and so on. But the core of Woodward's book is an account of how **George W. Bush**, **Dick Cheney**, **John McCain**, a rogue general named **Jack Keane** and a team of strategists at the American Enterprise Institute, all coordinated by the sycophantic, Bush-worshiping National Security Adviser **Stephen Hadley**, rode roughshod over the entire Washington establishment to prolong the war in Iraq by launching the "surge" in January 2007. Consider this: had they not done so, today, two years later, the war would largely be over.

In 2006, Woodward makes clear, the overwhelming consensus, among the public and in Washington, was for ending the war and starting the drawdown of US forces. That was the belief of Gen. **George Casey**, the US commander in Iraq; Gen. **John Abizaid**, the Centcom commander; and nearly all of the uniformed military. It was the view of the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group, the State Department and members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. In 487 pages, Woodward details how all of them were steamrollered.

The picture of Bush that emerges is not a flattering one. He is portrayed as a man convinced of his utter righteousness. "Not one doubt," he says. And: "We're killin' 'em. We're killin' 'em all." Yet at the same time, Bush is blissfully detached, relying on Hadley for everything. His decision to order the surge, made late in 2006, was a tough one, Bush told Woodward. "Now, this is a period of time where I've got, I don't know how many, holiday receptions." ROBERT DREYFUSS

RNC RAIDS: Before most journalists had arrived in St. Paul for the Republican National Convention, a crackdown on independent media was already under way. The weekend before the RNC, police carried out a series of "pre-emptive" raids, ostensibly designed to prevent violent protests. Among the targets was a home occupied by members of **I-Witness Video**, a New York–based collective that monitors police activity for abuse and that proved instrumental in documenting unlawful arrests during the 2004 RNC. **Democracy Now!** staffers had just landed in Minneapolis Saturday afternoon when they heard that one of their producers, **Elizabeth Press**, was in the I-Witness house, which was being surrounded by armed police officers. When they arrived, they found Press and seven others handcuffed in the backyard.

The group was soon released, but the raids set the tone for four days of unlawful arrests of media staff. On Monday, *DN!* host **Amy Goodman** was arrested along with producers **Sharif Abdel Kouddous** and **Nicole Salazar**, both of whom were bloodied and detained while covering a protest. Other arrests included an AP photographer and a freelancer for the *New York Post* (who pleaded that his was a "Republican paper," to no avail). Kouddous was arrested again, with cameraman **Rick Rowley**, three days later. All told, at least twenty-one journalists were arrested; Goodman was charged with obstruction, while Kouddous and Salazar face felony riot charges.

If police seemed to be operating like an unaccountable brute squad, it's partly because they were. In a "first-of-its-kind agreement," according to the Associated Press, the GOP host committee purchased insurance covering up to $10 million in damages and "unlimited legal costs" for police accused of "brutality" and "violating civil rights." When asked by Goodman how media could expect to function in such an atmosphere, St. Paul police chief **John Harrington** suggested, "By embedding reporters in our mobile field force." *Democracy Now!*, which has long prided itself on being unembedded, is calling for all charges to be dropped; visit democracynow.org for more information. LILIANA SEGURA

***THE NATION*'S ALASKA:** Republicans stake much on the claim that Alaska Governor **Sarah Palin**, their vice presidential pick, has executive experience superior to that of **Barack Obama**, **Joe Biden** and, though they neglect to mention it, **John McCain**. But GOPers have yet to thank the former *Nation* editor who helped them establish that claim. Central to the argument is the notion that even though Palin has been governor a scant twenty-two months, Alaska's top job is uniquely muscular. As Alaska's sole independently elected constitutional officer, the governor appoints and removes officials, like the attorney general, who in most other states are elected. As such, observed constitutional scholar **John Hellenthal** fifty years ago, Alaska's governor can be "held wholly responsible for the conduct of state administration."

Why is the governorship so powerful? Because **Ernest Gruening**, an editor at *The Nation* from 1920 to 1923, had served a frustrating thirteen years, from 1939 to 1953, as Alaska's weak territorial governor. Gruening, a determined anti-imperialist who as Alaska senator in 1964 cast one of two votes against the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, urged delegates to the prestatehood constitutional convention to write a document that would forever end the state's "colonial servitude" to Washington. A strong governor, delegates determined, could realize Gruening's vision of Alaska as "a great northern and western citadel of the American idea." With her GOP convention dismissals of the rule of law and civil liberties, not to mention her casual militarism, Palin falls well short of Gruening's standard. But she might at least acknowledge the gift Gruening and his fellow Constitution drafters gave her: the strong governorship she says has prepared her for the vice presidency. JOHN NICHOLS

LIES AND TAXES: The McCain campaign claims that Obama would raise taxes on Americans, a particularly egregious and easily exposed fib. According to the **Tax Policy Center**, Obama's plan would cut taxes for 80 percent of households and raise taxes for only about 10 percent of them—folks who make more than $227,000 a year. At that exact income, the hike would be $12.

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pires September 15, after which Interior can begin to implement the rule. Congress could block funding, but few expect that to happen. Lawsuits are certain to follow, but critics say the quickest solution would be for the next administration to withdraw the rule. Barack Obama seems likely to do that; he immediately condemned Kempthorne's proposal. John McCain was silent. But his choice of Palin—who does not believe global warming is caused by humans but does think it's acceptable for humans to gun down wolves from airplanes—suggests that Arctic creatures have much to fear from a McCain administration.

And not just Arctic creatures. What's missing from most discussions about endangered species is that preserving other species is not an act of charity; it is essential to our own survival. "Endangered species issues are usually seen as humans versus nature—we act in favor of one or the other—and that's just not the case," says Aaron Bernstein, a fellow at the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard and an editor (with Eric Chivian) of *Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity*. "Polar bears hold tremendous value to medicine, for example," explains Bernstein. "There is something about the metabolism of female polar bears that allows them to put on tremendous amounts of fat before winter but not become Type 2 diabetic. We don't understand how they do it yet, but this research is hugely important for the tens of millions of people who suffer from Type 2 diabetes."

But human dependence on other species is even broader. "We need [ants] to survive, but they don't need us at all," notes naturalist E.O. Wilson in a quote Bernstein and Chivian include in *Sustaining Life*. Without ants (and countless other underground species that will never be the subject of impassioned environmental appeals) to ventilate the soil, the earth would rot, halting food production. Without trees and other elements of a healthy forest, water supplies would shrink. Take away coral reefs and you destroy the bottom of the marine food chain. Global warming is on track to make as much as one-quarter of all plant and animal species on earth extinct by 2040, threatening general ecosystem collapse. To study the natural world is to realize, in the words of the environmental axiom, that everything is connected. What we do to the polar bears, we do to ourselves. MARK HERTSGAARD

Mark Hertsgaard, Nation environment correspondent, is a fellow of The Nation Institute. His next book is Living Through the Storm: Our Future Under Global Warming.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

On Sarah Palin's Revelations of God's Will

A pipeline for natural gas is God's will,
And ditto the war in Iraq, so says she.
And why's she so certain of what God wants done?
'Cause she and the Deity always agree.

Beauty and the Beast

A man fiddling with his wedding ring in the presence of another woman usually has something on his mind. At his introduction of Sarah Palin to the world on August 29, John McCain appeared a man possessed, playing with his ring, fastening his gaze on her breasts, her backside, his right fingers sliding up from that dratted gold band to the finger tip, pinching it as if to control the volcano stirring within him. "Boxed up," the young McCain once said in a near-frenzy, describing to a confidante the state of his emotions under the Naval Academy's discipline; the expression suited his performance that Friday in Dayton, when he finally regained composure by assuming the rigid posture of attention that the academy had taught so well.

Here was McCain, the angry old warrior, deploying sex as a central political weapon to recharge his potency, his party's fortunes and the cultural oomph of the right. Not gender. The Republicans didn't need just any woman to compete with Obama for the Wow factor, the Mmm factor, the stable, loving family factor. It is a calculated bonus that adherents can now speak loftily of making history, but for different reasons, drawing deep from the well of their identities, and not for the first time, both McCain and the right needed a sexual icon.

McCain's first wife, Carol, airbrushed from his "compelling story" even when her three children trooped onstage to complete the convention's family tableau, was a swimsuit model. Tall and slender when she saw John off to Vietnam, she was five inches shorter when he returned, broken grievously from a car accident, using a catheter and a wheelchair. "I don't look so good myself," he told her; privately he told friends the sight of her "appalled" him. He began looking for a more alluring replacement almost immediately. Carol says she has "no bitterness," according to a story by Sharon Churcher in the London *Daily Mail*. John just "wanted to be 25 again."

At 42 McNasty, as he was called in high school, took up with 24-year-old Cindy, a former junior rodeo queen, and, having boosted his image and his net worth via a marriage vow, soon reverted to the pattern of insults and macho egotism that has typified most of his life. He denigrated her education at USC as a tour through "the University of Spoiled Children." For all but one of several miscarriages, he left her on her own. When she was popping ten to fifteen pills a day to mask her pain and "do everything he wanted," he never noticed. In 1992, in a rage over her gentle teasing about his thinning hair, he exploded, "At least I don't plaster on the makeup like a trollop, you cunt," a one-two punch hurled in front of three journalists and two aides but unreported until recently, by Cliff Schecter in *The Real McCain*. On the campaign trail in June he joked about "beating my wife" and took umbrage when others failed to grasp the simple good fun in the remark. In early August he said he'd encouraged Cindy to enter the Miss Buffalo Chip beauty pageant at the high-revving, flesh-swinging biker rally in Sturgis, South Dakota. It might have been a fine quip except that up on the stage with her daughter Meghan, staring out toward the throng where a sign urged Show Ur Tits 4 McCain, Cindy had the thin, fixed smile of endurance, not joy. Just before the Palin pick, Mrs. McCain was so brittle that a supporter's energetic handshake put her in a cast.

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The Buddha

of the Buddha himself, and of the ways others have lived their lives in the attempt to follow his example.

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Dr. Malcolm David Eckel is Associate Professor of Religion at Boston University. He earned his Masters in Theology at Oxford and Ph.D. in the study of comparative religion at Harvard. In 1998, Professor Eckel received the Metcalf Award for Teaching Excellence, his university's highest award for teaching.

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With the press and vast swaths of the country swooning over the Obama family, John needed a new queen.

Like King Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther, who asserted his mastery by decreeing male headship and then held a kind of beauty pageant to replace Vashti as queen, McCain found his new "partner and soulmate" in Miss Wasilla 1984. Even Cindy, who suddenly let her hair down in bed-head style, perhaps at last relieved of the burdens of wifely duties, calls it "a perfect match." If only by association, John McCain may now fancy himself in the image of his deepest desire, top gun.

There may be a trap for him in the Book of Esther, which Sarah Palin, a biblical literalist, has used as a guide since becoming governor of Alaska, but more on that in a moment. For in her immediate ascendancy, Palin has fortified the Christian leadership that saw its first major organizing successes in the 1970s using sex as a weapon behind the banner of Miss Oklahoma 1958 (Anita Bryant) and her antigay crusade. With her husband, Todd, "quite a package," Palin has fired up the Christian rank and file, who, also since the 1970s, have been on the losing end of the economy but have drawn a diverting strength from simultaneously attacking the heralds of sexual liberation (feminists and gays) and appropriating their message: holding out mind-blowing sex as God's special gift to his truest heterosexual married believers; spawning a multimillion-dollar industry in Christian sex guides, aids, toys, soft-core porn (gussied up as novels or advice); and promoting a particular image of married womanhood as sex machine, urged, as Dagmar Herzog notes in an interesting new book, *Sex in Crisis*, to "keep their legs shaved and vaginas douched at all times. Just in case."

For the party's cynical power elite, who simply want to make gobs of money and have fun doing it, and never tire of a little culture war that helps them achieve both, Palin is the sex symbol they've been waiting for, better looking and more real than the ghastly gasbags Ann Coulter and Laura Ingraham. Rush Limbaugh, who began a push for Palin as VP in February, can hardly contain himself: "Sarah Palin: babies, guns, Jesus, hot damn!" he crowed. "We're the ones that have the babe on the ticket!" Never before has a political woman been pictured so often in a T-shirt, armed—Rambette. Never before in a major political figure has the image of Mother been merged so readily with fantasies from porno. "You Go, GILF," proclaim buttons on Republican chests, that is, Governor (or Grandmother) I'd Like to Fuck, a turn on the hungry married mom, or MILF, who has tapped the sex muscles and credit cards of porn lovers for years. While older working-class men talk of "Little Sarah" and her children, other men, including some on the left, have been rapturous in expressing their librarian fetish. "I was trying to be as frumpy as I could by wearing my hair on top of my head and these schoolmarm glasses," Palin told *Vogue*, as if insensible to that venerable erotic figure, the tigress unleashed once the glasses are removed and the tresses fall. *Why, Mrs. Palin, you're, you're b-b-beautiful… Exactly right, sonny, and no fool either.*

In Sarah Palin the right has its perfect emblem: moral avatar and commodity, uniting the put-upon woman who gushes, "She's just like me!" and the chest thumper who brays, "I'd do her, and her daughter" with those who have long exploited the fear and sorry machismo of both, with the help of another durable reactionary weapon. Now that it's official, as McCain's campaign manager said, that "this election is not about issues; this election is about a composite view of what people take away from these candidates," McCain's only live tag appears to be, Republicans Do It Better. Translation: small-town, gun-toting, rough-and-ready, all-American Sarah and Todd versus Barack and Michelle. White Power. (Or, close enough, White-ish.) Palin Power.

And there's the rub for McCain. It looks like Palin's party now, and whatever she does for his virility, she's not the hockey mom, or the babe, or the third wife he can stomp on. If her acceptance speech was indicative, she can match the "sneering, condescending attitude" that former Republican Senator Bob Smith says is fundamental to McCain, but with a smile and a dagger's turn. Her role model Esther doesn't just win favor from the king and a reprieve for herself and her people; she enables her people to engage in bloody slaughter against the king's other subjects, maneuvers for the public execution of his closest adviser and the man's sons, sees her de facto father become the de facto king; in sum, sabotages and unmans Ahasuerus. Palin has been too cagey to identify exactly who her people are, but in playing off cronies and oilmen in Alaska and even Christians to get where she is, she does seem to have grasped the art, so vital to politics, of the exquisitely timed double cross.

JOANN WYPIJEWSKI

Nation Notes

We are pleased to note several additions to our masthead. Barbara Crossette, our new UN correspondent, has been the *New York Times*'s UN bureau chief as well as its chief correspondent in Southeast Asia and South Asia. She is the author of *So Close to Heaven: The Vanishing Buddhist Kingdoms of the Himalayas* and *The Great Hill Stations of Asia*. Crossette won a George Polk Award in 1991 for her coverage of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. She is a consulting editor for the United Nations Association of the United States and is on the board of the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs.

Kristina Rizga, who will be joining our editorial board, is editor and publisher of the Webby-winning *WireTap*, a national news and culture magazine for the progressive youth movement. Before *WireTap*, she worked as an organizer and editor at the Media Alliance, a coalition of progressive reporters working for media reform, and at *AlterNet* as an associate editor. Rizga's writing has appeared in a variety of alternative weeklies and magazines, including thenation.com, *AlterNet*, *YES! Magazine* and the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, among others.

William Deresiewicz, who joins us as a contributing writer, has been reviewing fiction for *The Nation* since 2004. This year he was nominated for a National Magazine Award for reviews and criticism. His work is distinguished not only by its range of subjects (from Michael Chabon to Stefan Zweig; Zadie Smith to Cormac McCarthy) but also by its rigor, passion and eloquence.

Finally, we welcome Miriam Markowitz, our new assistant literary editor. Markowitz has previously been an assistant editor at *Harper's Magazine* and an editor at the *Vietnam News* in Hanoi.

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Alexander Cockburn

Fatal Distraction

Since a vital function of party politics, recently on display in Denver and St. Paul, is that of distraction, we can safely say that Sarah Palin is doing a fine job, admirably bipartisan in her services to Republicans and Democrats. The nomination of the lively and attractive governor of Alaska as Vice President diverts Republicans from dismay at the obvious difficulties of winning an election against an opponent with much more money while saddled with George Bush in the White House and, at the head of the ticket, an elderly and unstable habitué of Washington for more than thirty years running as the foe of big government and the standard-bearer of new ideas, none of which he and the other keynote Republican speakers have been able to identify.

Simultaneously, the idealistic younger voters whose mass turnout on November 4 is vital for Barack Obama deride Palin's enthusiasm for shooting wolves from helicopters, thus distracting themselves from unpleasant reflections on the candidate of hope and change, whose prime foreign policy commitment is to increase the US military presence in Afghanistan and hence the certainty that Afghan children will be shot from the air or blown up by US gunships in steadily increasing numbers.

As Obama said in 2002, he is not against war per se. Wars mean dead children. Now he wants to send 10,000 more troops to Afghanistan. And exactly at the moment liberals were diverting themselves with Palin's shifting posture on pork barrel projects in Alaska, Obama was doing a major somersault of his own. He has joined John McCain in vigorously endorsing the performance of US forces in Iraq, telling Fox's Bill O'Reilly that the surge "succeeded beyond our wildest dreams," a craven surrender to Republican mythmaking and a club McCain will be able to whack Obama with in the upcoming debates.

Liberals delightedly ridicule Palin's Christian certitudes about the truth of the Bible, the sanctity of life from the moment of conception, the advisability of sexual abstinence for teenagers and so forth. This is a distraction, one I find rather pleasant, from the impalpability of Obama's positions, which shift, as with the surge in Iraq or with the rights and wrongs of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, and usually attain maximum clarity when Obama is ensuring that he won't be ambushed from the right.

There are certitudes about our political situation that were not addressed in Denver or St. Paul.

Indeed, it would take the pen of Swift to depict a scene more ludicrous than the recent Republican convention, featuring thunderous denunciations of big government a few hours before Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson rushed to bail out Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in the largest nationalization in history, privatizing the profits and nationalizing the losses, sticking the taxpayers with a $300 billion tab.

The press referred tactfully to the misleading procedures identified by Treasury accountants scrutinizing Fannie and Freddie's ledgers. In cruder language the operators of these two giants had been engaged in the pleasant activity of cooking the books by borrowing at low-interest government rates, selling the repackaged mortgages at a higher-interest markup and then lying about their actual exposures. "Fannie and Freddie were almost single-handedly supporting the junk mortgage market that was making Wall Street rich," economist Michael Hudson told *CounterPunch* the Monday after the takeover, protecting themselves from regulatory harassment by shoveling campaign contributions at the relevant lawmakers sitting on the financial committees in Washington.

Now the Treasury is refloating these two huge casinos and sending them down the river again, so that Wall Street can stay happy and China and the other overseas lenders can be assured that the money they're lending the United States to finance activities like strafing Afghan children from the air is at least partly secured.

Even Swift could not depict the brazen effrontery of McCain offering himself as the foe of the special interests when his "unofficial" economic adviser is former Senator Phil Gramm, the key player in Congress in the late '90s in the deregulatory assaults that overthrew Glass-Steagall, opened the door to the derivatives scams and greased Wall Street's wheels as it plunged the economy into its present crisis. Obama alluded obliquely to Gramm without naming him in his Denver speech, mentioning the jeers of a top McCain adviser about Americans suffering from a "mental recession" and becoming "a nation of whiners." But why not identify McCain's detestable associate? The problem is that co-conspiring in Gramm's deregulatory rampages in the late '90s was the Clinton Administration, spurred on by the Democratic Leadership Council. On the ticket with Obama is that lifelong serf of the banks, Joe Biden. Obama himself has been heavily staked by Wall Street.

When they look back on it, people will surely see this election as one of the larger missed opportunities in the nation's history for scrutiny and shake-up of our economic and imperial arrangements: an unpopular war abroad, brazen thievery by the rich and powerful at home, widespread discontent of huge slabs of the electorate, beleaguered by debt, low wages and joblessness. How easy it should have been for a politician as eloquent and intelligent as Obama to create an irresistible popular constituency challenging business as usual. But what's positively eerie is the cautious sensitivity of his political antennas, alerting him time and again to the risks of actually saying or pledging anything substantive by way of challenge to present arrangements. Small wonder it's hard to remember much that he says, because so little that he does say is ever substantively memorable or surprising or exciting; no wonder that Sarah Palin is proving so successful a distraction. ■

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Katha Pollitt

Lipstick on a Wing Nut

John McCain chose the supremely underqualified Sarah Palin as his running mate partly because she is a woman. If you have a problem with that, you're a sexist. She talks incessantly about being a mother of five and uses her newborn, Trig, who has Down syndrome, as a campaign prop. If you wonder how she'll handle all those kids and the Veep job too, you're a super-sexist. "When do they ever ask a man that question?" charges that fiery feminist Rudy Giuliani. Indeed, Palin, who went back to work when Trig was three days old, gets nothing but praise from Phyllis Schlafly, James Dobson and the folks at *National Review*, who usually blame all the ills of modern America on those neurotic, harried, selfish, frustrated, child-neglecting, husband-castrating working mothers. Even stranger, her five-months-pregnant 17-year-old, Bristol, gets nothing but compassion and respect from Bill O'Reilly, Rush Limbaugh and others who have spent their careers slut-shaming teens for having sex—and blaming their parents for letting it happen.

If there were an Olympics for hypocrisy, the Republican Party would have more gold medals than Michael Phelps. And Palin would be wearing quite a few of them. It takes chutzpah for a mother to thrust her pregnant teen into the world's harshest spotlight and then demand the world respect the girl's privacy. But then it takes chutzpah to support criminalizing abortion and then praise Bristol's "decision" to have the baby. The right to decide, and privacy, after all, are two of the things Palin wants to deny every other woman, and every other family, in America. Palin's even said she would "choose life" if her daughter was pregnant from rape. Can't you just hear Bristol groaning, "Mo-om…!"

The Republicans bashed Barack Obama as a "celebrity," but now they've got a star of their own, so naturally the rules have changed. Nothing would suit them better than for the media to spend the next two months spellbound by the wacky carnival on ice that is the Palin family: Todd, *aka* the First Dude, the kids, Levi the hunky bad-boy dad-to-be—well, maybe not him so much after his expletive-adorned MySpace page briefly came to light ("I'm a fuckin' redneck"; "I don't want kids"—whoops). The snowmobiles, the moose burgers, the guns, the hair, the glasses that are flying off America's shelves (starting at $375 a pair, and she has seven). Fretting over the work/family issue alone should take up enough column inches to employ all the female journalists in America from now to next Mother's Day. And don't forget that op-ed staple, What Does This Mean for Feminism?

Well, I'm not playing. I don't care about Sarah Palin's family. I don't care if she's a good mother. I don't care if she's happily married, or who shops and who vacuums, or who takes care of the kids while both parents are at work. I don't want her recipe for caribou hot dogs, either. Life *chez* Sarah and Todd might make an adorable sitcom (*Leave It to Jesus*?) or a scathing tell-all a decade or so down the road (*Governor Dearest*?). Either way, so what? This is an election, not *The View*. As for feminism's meaning, what can you say after you've said that her career shows that even right-wing fundamentalist women have taken in feminism's message of empowerment and that's *good*, but that Palin's example suggests women can do it all without support from society and that's *bad*?

Count me as a feminist who never believed that being PTA president meant you could be, well, President. The more time we spend on dippy ruminations—how does she do it? Queen Bee on steroids or the hockey mom next door? how hot is Todd, anyway?—the less focus there will be on the kind of queries that should come first with any vice presidential candidate, and certainly would if Palin were a man. Questions like:

§ Suppose your 14-year-old daughter Willow is brutally raped in her bedroom by an intruder. She becomes pregnant and wants an abortion. Could you tell the parents of America why you think your child and their children should be forced by law to have their rapists' babies?

§ You say you don't believe global warming is man-made. Could you tell us what scientists you've spoken with or read who have led you to that conclusion? What do you think the 2,500 scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are getting wrong?

§ If you didn't try to fire Wasilla librarian Mary Ellen Baker over her refusal to consider censoring books, why *did* you try to fire her?

§ What is the European Union, and how does it function?

§ Forty-seven million Americans lack health insurance. John Goodman, who has advised McCain on healthcare, has proposed redefining them as covered because, he says, anyone can get care at an ER. Do you agree with him?

§ What is the function of the Federal Reserve?

§ Cindy and John McCain say you have experience in foreign affairs because Alaska is next to Russia. When did you last speak with Prime Minister Putin, and what did you talk about?

§ Approximately how old is the earth? Five thousand years? 10,000? 5 billion?

§ You are a big fan of President Bush, so why didn't you mention him even once in your convention speech?

§ McCain says cutting earmarks and waste will make up for revenues lost by making the tax cuts permanent. Experts say that won't wash. Balancing the Bush tax cuts plus new ones proposed by McCain would most likely mean cutting Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security. Which would you cut?

§ You're suing the federal government to have polar bears removed from the endangered species list, even as Alaska's northern coastal ice is melting and falling into the sea. Can you explain the science behind your decision?

§ You've suggested that God approves of the Iraq War and the Alaska pipeline. How do you know? ■

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The Wrong Path to Conservation

Dangling cargo to win local support, Western enviros instead aroused ire in Papua New Guinea.

by MARK DOWIE

Late one morning in September 2002, a luxury mega-yacht named the Reef Encounter cruised slowly into the tiny Milne Bay harbor of Kwaraiwa. There were twenty-one passengers and a crew of nine aboard. Each passenger occupied a private suite with bath. After days of scuba diving in resplendent coral reefs and visiting enchanting tribal villages, the passengers met on board for cocktails, a catered dinner and a PowerPoint presentation about the state of the area's ecosystems.

Milne Bay, a province that's a large archipelago off the southeast coast of Papua New Guinea, they learned, possesses some of the most impressive and bountiful reefs in Melanesia. While biodiversity remains high in the region, the impending collapse of about 8 percent of the area's reefs, and early signs of "habitat degradation," have raised the concern of local citizens and the international conservation establishment, a few key members of which were aboard the Reef Encounter. Their mission was pre-emptive: to stop the archipelago's decline in biodiversity before it becomes irreversible.

Along the shoreline of Kwaraiwa, islanders gathered to greet the passengers, among whom were rumored to be Harrison Ford and Clint Eastwood. But first to come ashore was someone the people didn't recognize—Peter Seligmann, CEO and chairman of the board of Conservation International. CI, based in the Washington, DC, area, is one of the largest international conservation organizations in the world ($117 million in revenue in 2006); Seligmann, its co-founder, had come to explore the ecosystems of Milne Bay and perhaps to restore some lost biodiversity to its shoreline. (A spokeperson for CI declined to confirm details of the voyage for this article.)

Eastwood, as it turned out, was not on board, nor was Ford. Ford might have been, though, as he is a loyal member of the CI board, its celebrity poster boy and a generous donor to the organization. Eastwood would have been along for the ride. World-renowned oceanographer Sylvia Earle was there by Seligmann's side, as was Stone Gossard, rhythm guitarist for Pearl Jam. Gossard and his girlfriend were hoping to explore ways, through support of CI's work, to offset the 5,700-ton carbon footprint Pearl Jam was about to create with an upcoming world tour.

The major "targeted" donor aboard—and there is almost always at least one on such voyages—was H. Fisk Johnson, CEO of SC Johnson (a company based in Racine, Wisconsin, whose products include Pledge, Drano, Ziploc, Raid, Glade and Windex). Fisk is number 215 on the *Forbes* 400 list of richest Americans, and he is known to be a generous supporter of conservation. Seligmann is a legendary fundraiser in conservation circles. He has to be. Aside from funding enormous con-

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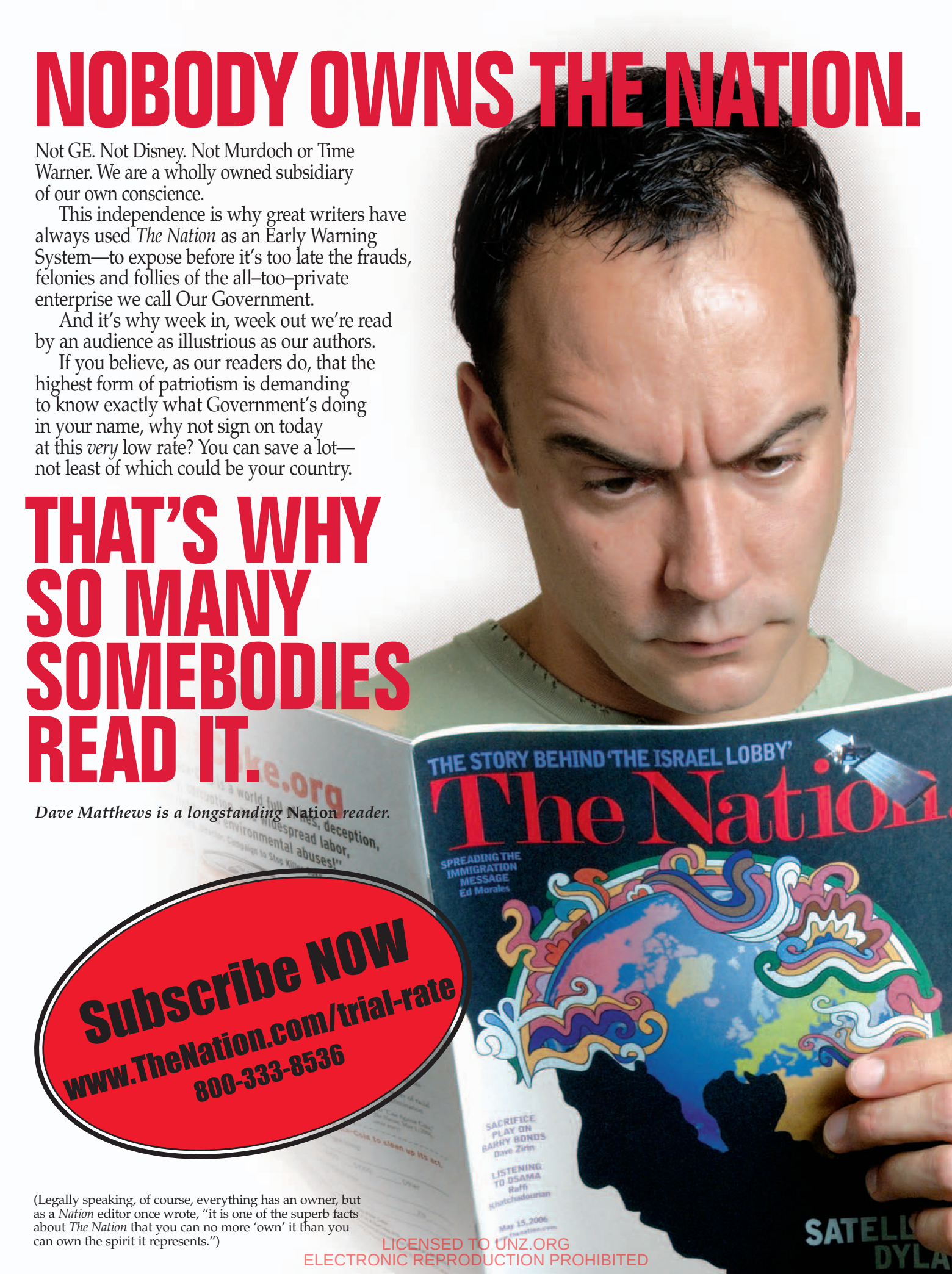

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servation projects around the world, he must meet a payroll for more than 800 people, pay rent in twenty-seven countries, subcontract with hundreds of organizations and maintain boats and other vehicles around the world.

To court high rollers like Johnson, an internal department called CI Sojourns was created. It was that office that leased the Reef Encounter—which goes for $25,000 a day, according to the ship's owners—and made the arrangements for its expedition to Milne Bay. The trip paid off for CI Sojourns. Pearl Jam did not come through, but Johnson is now on the CI board with Ford; Queen Noor of Jordan; Lewis Coleman, president and CFO of DreamWorks; Nick Pritzker, CEO of Hyatt; Wal-Mart chairman Rob Walton; former World Bank president James Wolfensohn; Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel; and Lt. Gen. S.K.I. Khama, who ascended to the presidency of Botswana in April.

There were also four representatives of Moore's foundation, who flew in from San Francisco on a chartered jet and stayed at the plush ($500 per night) Karawari Lodge while they waited for Seligmann and the Reef Encounter to arrive from Cairns, Australia. The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation was well into a ten-year, $280 million commitment to CI, the largest grant to a conservation NGO in foundation history. So a substantial portion of CI's future support was aboard the Reef Encounter that day, an impressive array of wealth and generosity. However, the islanders had no interest in CI's large donors: it was the mere mention of Dirty Harry and Indiana Jones that drew them to the beach and gave Seligmann the rapt audience he sought for his clear and simple message.

"Five years ago we dove in these waters and saw tuna and other large fish everywhere," Seligmann told the citizens of Kwaraiwa, according to islanders who remember the visit. "This week we have been diving wherever we could on our way to your island, and the big fish are gone. Our scientists tell us that the biological diversity, health and productivity of your marine systems are eroding rapidly. We want to restore biodiversity to your reefs and fisheries and believe that with sound science, enough money and your help we can do it in ten years." In a part of the world where fish is food and food security is a constant worry, this was a welcome message, particularly when spiced with promises of debt reduction, new schoolhouses, water systems, clinics and community centers.

"Peter told the island councilor to come up with a list of what the community needed, to be given in a week, and he would deliver in three months," wrote David Mitchell, a former CI staffer familiar with the practice of trading modern goods, known in the region as "cargo," for conservation, in an e-mail to CI staffers in 2002. "When I heard this I advised the councilor to put together a small list of mostly urgently required items and not to be greedy. I also told him that Peter was really looking for conservation and that this list should not be tied to it." To tide the village over while they awaited Seligmann's cargo, Sylvia Earle signed one of her magnificent marine atlases and donated it to the school.

For the next two weeks the Reef Encounter continued to cruise between dive spots, dropping anchor at islands with names like Nuakata, Iabam and Pahilele. At some the big-fish message was repeated, ecosystem collapse forewarned and more promises of cargo proffered. When the voyage ended October 1, passengers were driven to Alotau, the capital of Milne Bay province, where they caught chartered flights to Australia and beyond. Five stayed on to dive in Indonesia's lush and remote Raja Ampat islands, a future CI conservation site.

What followed the voyage of the Reef Encounter was one of the most glaring worldwide examples of botched conservation. Within four years—in November 2006, when I arrived in Milne Bay—the project's $6,443,022 budget had been spent (two years before it was supposed to have been) on high-salaried scientists, expatriate staff, SUVs, fast boats, plush offices, first-class air travel, complex marine monitoring technologies and CI's management fee. (Funders included the World Bank's Global Environmental Facility; the United Nations Devel opment Program; the governments of Japan, Australia and Papua New Guinea, or PNG; and the Moore Foundation.) According to the UNDP's project evaluation, somewhere between $800,000 and $1.2 million was unaccounted for, and in an interview, a UNDP representative told me they were unsure whether CI had ever contributed the $1.6 million the organization had committed to the project. (After initially refusing to tell me whether CI would ever account for the missing funds, CI asserted that the UNDP's figure had "no basis in fact," and claimed that it had contributed $2.3 million to the project.)

Conservation International, critics say, ran the project with minimal understanding of the culture, practices or knowledge of the islanders.

There was very little in the way of conservation to show for this massive investment of public and private funds. Moreover, the Milne Bay governor wanted CI out of his province immediately and was calling for a forensic audit of what he called "the grossly misnomered" Milne Bay Community Based Coastal and Marine Conservation Project. "These large NGOs…believe they are above the law," Governor Tim Neville told PNG's Parliament the following week, "and can simply do and say as they please, without respecting the people of the countries where they work."

The day I left Alotau, Neville was threatening to confiscate all of CI's equipment, evict its last two staffers from their offices, seal the doors and ask the country's prime minister, Sir Michael Somare, to expel CI entirely from Papua New Guinea. Somare is the longest-serving national leader in Melanesia and is highly regarded among his peers in the region. An

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Mark Dowie, an investigative historian based in Point Reyes Station, California, is the author of the forthcoming Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict Between Global Conservation and Native Peoples. *Research support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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expulsion from PNG could spawn a domino-chain of evictions against CI through the entire South Pacific. And CI has grand ambitions in the South Pacific.

So Seligmann is fighting back with all the PR muscle and diplomacy he can muster. A global reputation is at stake, and scores of supporting foundations, banks, national governments, development agencies and corporations are watching. CI admits that the Milne Bay Project faltered, but it blames the outcome on "insurmountable political and institutional issues, that, despite our best efforts, we were unable to resolve." That is code for Governor Neville, who, says Seligmann, made a frontal attack on CI when he sensed that his people were being "tricked into embracing conservation." Seligmann also denies any financial impropriety and invites the audit that Neville threatened. And Seligmann predicts that once the storm settles from CI's first foray into Milne Bay, phase two will commence and CI will be back in action.

Amid allegations of gross mismanagement, the Milne Bay project became one of the most glaring worldwide examples of botched conservation.

No one I interviewed in Papua New Guinea, some of whom were serving out their last days on the CI payroll, held that assessment. They, the UN, the Global Environmental Facility and the project's three independent evaluators all placed blame for the fiasco squarely on the shoulders of Seligmann and CI's leaders, who, they say, ran the "community-based" project with minimal concern for or understanding of the culture, historical practices or traditional ecological knowledge of the islanders.

Until Christian missionaries flooded the South Pacific with Bibles and rosaries in the late nineteenth century, cargo cults were common. These bizarre sects literally worshiped the goods that were unloaded from the shiny boats and airplanes that floated and flew mysteriously into the region as global trade expanded. Cargo was manna from heaven, and the white men who brought it were revered as demigods. When missionaries gave the islanders something more powerful to worship than cargo, most, though not all, of the cults disappeared. What has not completely dissolved in Melanesia, however, is the cargo mentality, a residual desire for material goods that makes it easy for a superwealthy organization like CI to get attention by promising schools, clinics, boats and community centers—cargo—in return for compliance with a conservation agenda designed in and imposed from Washington. And that, to the horror of CI's regional staff, is precisely the path Seligmann followed as he and his boatload of demigods cruised through the islands of Milne Bay.

At Nuakata, Seligmann and his fellow travelers displayed their wealth by purchasing its small fleet of rustic but well-crafted outrigger canoes, which were loaded onto the Reef Encounter's upper deck and shipped back to America to adorn CI's offices. The $50 per canoe was a steal by American standards but a windfall to a people who have only recently seen the face of Ulysses S. Grant. Although Seligmann was repeatedly warned by his local staff that trading cargo for conservation would never work, he persisted.

Long before the Reef Encounter arrived, the islanders and the national government of PNG were aware that the 210-island archipelago of Milne Bay was ecologically important. Local long-line fishermen and others from faraway ports were depleting vital fish stocks and had killed thousands of endangered sea turtles in the process. Aggressive harvesting of shark fins and *bêche-de-mer* (sea cucumbers) for the booming, delicacy-obsessed Chinese culinary market was threatening those species, while rotational agriculture and a growing human population put stress on shoreline ecosystems.

Seligmann had heard or read all this from preliminary research conducted by CI social and biological scientists in the two years before he set sail. But like so many leaders of global conservation, he tended to pay more attention to ecological findings than to the advice that came from sociologists and others who had studied and knew the traditions and cultures of Melanesian islanders, people like anthropologist Jeff Kinch, who repeatedly warned Seligmann and others at CI's Washington headquarters about the hazards of cargo conservation. In short, Kinch told them it would backfire. "Peter could not have picked a worse place to make promises," he told Bruce Beehler, CI's Washington-based overseer of Melanesia. "These promises will now spread throughout the other islands in the area and people will have their hands out, opening the way for 'conservation blackmail.'"

Kinch is Australian, married to a Papuan and has three children. He has lived in PNG and plied the waters of Milne Bay for ten years. He knows many of its leaders by their first names. For the two years before the project's start-up he researched and co-wrote two studies for CI and sent voluminous memos to Port Moresby (PNG's capital) and Washington on the ecological and social conditions of the islands in Milne Bay. Many in and outside CI believed he would have made an ideal chief technical adviser (CTA), the project's top management position, which would be filled as soon as the funds arrived from the Global Environmental Facility and other supporters.

But when the money was delivered in January 2004, CI imported another Australian to be CTA. Peter MacKay could not be more different in style or philosophy from Jeff Kinch. MacKay had an impressive résumé, with experience managing large projects. He was a high-powered, systems-oriented micromanager but knew next to nothing about Milne Bay islanders or the complex ownership systems and local conservation practices they have developed over centuries, things Kinch knew by heart and had described in memos. Kinch strongly urged "not only that local communities be fully involved [with the project], but also that the decision making authority remain with local communities."

The problem with cargo conservation, Kinch warned, is that the local incentive to conserve natural resources shifts from restoring food security to obtaining cargo. So when promised goods are not delivered, the conservation motive disappears. Local leaders may then begin putting a hand out for more cargo—this time from commercial fishing companies and other

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Population, Immigration And The Foreseeable Limits Of America's Capacity: A Conundrum Of Epic Proportions For The Progressive Thinker.

As America's population races from the current 300 million to a projected 400 million in the next 30 years*, progressive thinkers are confronted with a debate among themselves – and others – as to our nation's capacity to absorb domestic population growth and growth due almost entirely to immigration. What price will we pay in terms of the environment? What will be the impact on resources from water to energy? What additional challenges will be created by this growth? What is our responsibility to future generations?

The Dots That Nobody Really Wants To Connect

People of virtually all major political persuasions agree that America has problems—huge problems. Air quality in many regions is a threat to health. Water is compromised and becoming scarce. Traffic in a number of metropolitan areas has arrived at a point that makes it unfixable. Infrastructure is a disaster waiting to happen. Who can argue with those observations? The disagreement arises when anyone makes the point that all of these problems are caused by a large and fast-growing population. The more people there are, the more challenging the problems become. These problems are acute with our population at the current level of 300 million. What happens at 400 million? Or 600 million?

The Misconception Of Inevitability

One prevailing thought for those willing to connect the dots is that meteoric population growth is inevitable. The pyramid is being built and there is nothing we can do about it. Population growth is destined to be exponential. But the reality is that Americans are having fewer children. The other reality is that 82%** of America's future population growth will be driven by immigration and births to immigrants. While immigration at some level will surely continue, there is a case to be made for taking another look at the numbers in order to maintain some order and common sense in the growth of our population.

At Some Point, We May Have To Make A Choice

We want it all. We want a clean environment, adequate natural resources, good housing, plenty of food, first-rate healthcare and so on. We also feel a need to welcome the world to our front door, or in millions of cases, our back door. But America is rapidly approaching the point of no return. Either we opt for preserving the quality of life that has attracted so many millions in the past by limiting some in the future. Or we continue to accept millions, knowing that our children and grandchildren will continue to pay a huge price.

Nobody wants to close the doors. Nobody wants to totally abandon our heritage of immigration and rich tapestry it has woven. But with more sensible numbers we could actually restore it. More and more progressive thinkers are saying it is time to connect the dots. To think about the future. To solve the conundrum that is placing so many like-minded thinkers in conflict.

America's Leadership Team for Long Range Population-Immigration-Resource Planning

300 million people today, 400 million in just 30 years. Think about it.

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*Based on U.S. Census Bureau projections, 2008
**Pew Hispanic Center

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exploiters of the reef. With few heeding his advice, Kinch resigned in 2003 shortly before MacKay came on board.

"Peter MacKay was a bully," recalls Gay Kula, CI's PNG director and a PNG citizen who says he tried but failed to rein him in. "It's amazing how much damage one man can do." But CI Washington kept MacKay on and persisted in trading promises of cargo for conservation agreements. Things grew worse in Milne Bay as cargo enticement evolved—as Kinch predicted it would—into a form of conservation blackmail wherein promises of cargo were withheld from communities that did not sign on to the CI strategy. In the end, Kula says, "money killed conservation."

In the months that followed, the project descended into disarray. Morale collapsed, money was squandered and funders began to have second thoughts about CI's choice of a project manager. CI, which had created so many promising and generous jobs for so many scientists and local leaders, some of whom told me it was the best job they'd ever had, was becoming the bête noire of Milne Bay and, worse by far, of the conservation funding community.

A project evaluation characterized the attitude of local citizens toward it as 'Big cars, fancy office, lots of talk but nothing to show for it.'

In their assessment of the CI project, completed in July 2006 for the UNDP, independent evaluators Peter Johnston, John Duguman and Graham Baines described a gradual decline of staff morale and deep community frustration in the Milne Bay area, caused by a combination of overbearing control, bad communications, slipshod management, lack of transparency, cultural insensitivity and a long string of broken promises. In their two-month review the three evaluators interviewed more than 100 project staffers, village and civic leaders, government officials and church leaders. The most common response from local citizens was characterized as "Big cars, fancy office, lots of talk but nothing to show for it." One CI staffer predicted that "the only thing that will save this project is the forgiving nature of the Milne Bay people."

"Project management by CI has been extremely poor, indeed negligent," reads the evaluation, "with poor reporting, excessive charges for overhead expenses, a poor relationship with provincial government officials and little or no effective oversight or control of project activities.… There are records from early 2005 expressing serious concerns.… Yet CI Washington made no effort to investigate and resolve the issues. Had CI intervened at that time the project could have delivered good results." That was written by people who told funders and local Milne Bayans that in composing their final report they had restrained their negative opinions of CI.

To be fair, the Milne Bay Project was not a total failure. The biodiversity assessment it produced between 1997 and 2002 is still of some use. And while CI's behavior painted an unfortunate picture of international conservation, conservation remains part of the daily conversation in Papua New Guinea's island communities, and several grassroots efforts have emerged since CI left the area.

And to be fair to Seligmann, one must keep in mind the nature of his job. Supporting huge staffs and infrastructure demands that the CEOs of enormous, quasi-corporate entities like CI keep fundraising high on their agenda; goal one, in fact. When you have to raise $100 million a year just to break even, there isn't time to think about much else.

By most accounts the Milne Bay area's marine health is pretty much as it was before 2002. The large fish—tuna, marlin, barracuda and sharks—are back. If they left at all it was only for a while, perhaps drawn eastward by El Niño, a warm current of water that appears every three to seven years in the eastern Pacific and temporarily disrupts the oceanic food chain. When I first interviewed Seligmann I asked if he knew that 2002 was an El Niño year. He refused to answer that question, among many others. Later, through his media director, he asserted that CI had every intention of returning to Milne Bay to complete its mission there. Then, shortly before this article went to press, *The Nation* received Seligmann's replies to my questions through CI's lawyer. Seligmann now says he had known it was an El Niño year and claims that "an independent audit of the project found no financial irregularities." He did not say who had performed or paid for the audit, or provide any documentation of its existence.

If Milne Bay's new governor, John Luke Crittin, opens his arms to CI, the organization will be returning to a very different and wary community. As a somewhat embittered Modi Pontio, community engagement coordinator for CI's Milne Bay Project, told me the day before I left (the day before her office was closed and sealed by the government), "We don't need scientists who we don't know coming back in here to tell us how to manage our ecosystems."

"We were used, and it will be hard to face some of the people we worked with in the future," remarked local program manager Bena Seta the same day.

"It's going to be difficult to achieve conservation in Milne Bay in light of all the broken promises," says Geoff Callister, an anthropologist on the project, who, when I spoke with him in November, was suing CI for six months' back pay. "WWF [World Wildlife Fund] is good here, and so is TNC [The Nature Conservancy], but they and all foreign conservationists have been tarred by the CI brush. It's hard for any of us who worked on the project to find work here." Fortunately for the international conservation establishment, TNC and WWF maintain respectable footholds in Papua New Guinea, staffed largely by locals who respect and understand the hundreds of complex cultures that make up their country.

While failures of this magnitude are rare in transnational conservation, the Milne Bay fiasco is not a unique episode, nor is CI a lone culprit in the insensitive treatment of local peoples. The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, the African Wildlife Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Society all share CI's global reputation for imperious behavior, and they also have failures on their project lists. But the Milne Bay story

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best illustrates the folly of cargo conservation and the arrogance so often projected by well-endowed Northern environmental NGOs in the global South.

What is ironic about this project, and unjust in a way, is that a people who have been living sustainably in a relatively healthy environment for thousands of years were in effect being blamed for its recent decline in ecological health by staffs and organizations whose support comes directly from the economic surplus of a civilization that is doing the real, long-term damage to coral reefs and oceanic marine ecosystems. In fact, it's damaging the entire planet, which international conservation seeks to protect. One lesson to be learned from the Milne Bay fiasco is that the people who will help you most in conservation are the ones who depend on the environment for their livelihood. Another, from a Papuan aphorism: "When you visit a community, walk in, don't fly." ■

The New Humanitarian Order

Is the ICC's "responsibility to protect" really just an assertion of neocolonial domination?

by MAHMOOD MAMDANI

On July 14, after much advance publicity and fanfare, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court applied for an arrest warrant for the president of Sudan, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, on charges that included genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Important questions of fact arise from the application as presented by the prosecutor. But even more important is the light this case sheds on the politics of the "new humanitarian order."

The conflict in Darfur began as a civil war in 1987–89, before Bashir and his group came to power. It was marked by indiscriminate killing and mass slaughter on both sides. The language of genocide was first employed in that conflict. The Fur representative at the May 1989 reconciliation conference in El Fasher pointed to their adversaries and claimed that "the aim is a total holocaust and no less than the complete annihilation of the Fur people and all things Fur." In response the Arab representative traced the origin of the conflict to "the end of the '70s when…the Arabs were depicted as foreigners who should be evicted from this area of Dar Fur."

The ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, has uncritically taken on the point of view of one side in this conflict, a side that was speaking of a "holocaust" before Bashir came to power, and he attributes far too much responsibility for the killing to Bashir alone. He goes on to speak of "new settlers" in today's Darfur, suggesting that he has internalized this partisan perspective.

At the same time, the prosecutor speaks in ignorance of history: "AL BASHIR…promoted the idea of a polarization between tribes aligned with him, whom he labeled 'Arabs' and…the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa…derogatory [*sic*] referred to as 'Zurgas' or 'Africans'." The racialization of identities in Darfur has its roots in the British colonial period. As early as the late 1920s, the British tried to organize two confederations in Darfur: one Arab, the other black (Zurga). Racialized identities were incorporated into the census and provided the frame for government policy. It is not out of the blue that the two sides in the 1987–89 civil war described themselves as Arab and Zurga. If anything, the evidence shows that successive Sudanese governments—Bashir's included—looked down on all Darfuris, non-Arab Zurga as well as Arab nomads.

Having falsely attributed to Bashir the racialization of the conflict, Moreno-Ocampo focuses on two consequences of the conflict in Darfur: ethnic cleansing through land-grabbing and atrocities in the camps. He attributes both to Bashir. He is again wrong. The land-grabbing has been a consequence of three different, if related, causes. The first is the colonial system, which reorganized Darfur as a series of tribal homelands, designating the largest for settled peasant tribes and none for fully nomadic tribes. The second is environmental degradation: according to the United Nations Environment Program, the Sahara expanded by 100 kilometers in four decades; this process reached a critical point in the mid-1980s, pushing all tribes of

BEN CURTIS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Refugees at a makeshift camp in West Darfur, 2004

Mahmood Mamdani, Herbert Lehman Professor of Government at Columbia University, was director of the Institute of African Studies from 1999 to 2004. This article is excerpted from the conclusion to his book Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics and the War on Terror, *forthcoming from Pantheon in January.*

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North Darfur, Arab and non-Arab, farther south, onto more fertile Fur and Masalit lands. This in turn led to a conflict between tribes with homelands and those without them. The imperative of sheer survival explains in part the unprecedented brutality of the violence in every successive war since 1987–89. The third cause came last: the brutal counterinsurgency unleashed by the Bashir regime in 2003–04 in response to an insurgency backed up by peasant tribes.

It is not just the early history of the conflict that the prosecutor is poorly informed about. In his eagerness to build a case, Moreno-Ocampo glosses over recent history as well. He charges Bashir with following up the mass slaughter of 2003–04 with attrition by other means in the camps: "He did not need bullets. He used other weapons: rape, hunger and fear." This claim flies in the face of evidence from UN sources in Darfur, quoted by Julie Flint in the London *Independent*, that the death rate in the camps came down to around 200 a month from early 2005, less than in South Sudan or in the poor suburbs of Khartoum.

The point of the prosecutor's case is to connect all consequences in Darfur to a single cause: Bashir. Moreno-Ocampo told journalists in The Hague, "What happened in Darfur is a consequence of Bashir's will." The prosecution of Bashir comes across as politicized justice. As such, it will undermine the legitimacy of the ICC and almost certainly will not help solve the crisis in Darfur. It is perhaps understandable that a prosecutor in a rush would gloss over all evidence that might undermine his case. But we must not. A workable solution to the conflict requires that all its causes be understood in their full complexity.

The perpetrators of violence in Darfur should be held accountable, but when and how are political decisions that cannot belong to the ICC.

Darfur was the site of mass deaths in 2003–04. World Health Organization sources—still the most reliable available information on mortality levels then—trace these deaths to two major causes: roughly 80 percent to drought-related diarrhea and 20 percent to direct violence. There is no doubt that the perpetrators of violence should be held accountable, but when and how are political decisions that cannot belong to the ICC prosecutor. More than the innocence or guilt of the president of Sudan, it is the relationship between law and politics—including the politicization of the ICC—that poses a wider issue, one of greatest concern to African governments and peoples.

The New Humanitarian Order

When World War II broke out, the international order could be divided into two unequal parts: one privileged, the other subjugated; one a system of sovereign states in the Western Hemisphere, the other a colonial system in most of Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Postwar decolonization recognized former colonies as states, thereby expanding state sovereignty as a global principle of relations between states. The end of the cold war has led to another basic shift, heralding an international humanitarian order that promises to hold state sovereignty accountable to an international human rights standard. Many believe that we are in the throes of a systemic transition in international relations.

The standard of responsibility is no longer international law; it has shifted, fatefully, from law to rights. As the Bush Administration made patently clear at the time of the invasion of Iraq, humanitarian intervention does not need to abide by the law. Indeed, its defining characteristic is that it is beyond the law. It is this feature that makes humanitarian intervention the twin of the "war on terror."

This new humanitarian order, officially adopted at the UN's 2005 World Summit, claims responsibility for the protection of vulnerable populations. That responsibility is said to belong to "the international community," to be exercised in practice by the UN, and in particular by the Security Council, whose permanent members are the great powers. This new order is sanctioned in a language that departs markedly from the older language of law and citizenship. It describes as "human" the populations to be protected and as "humanitarian" the crisis they suffer from, the intervention that promises to rescue them and the agencies that seek to carry out intervention. Whereas the language of sovereignty is profoundly political, that of humanitarian intervention is profoundly apolitical, and sometimes even antipolitical. Looked at closely and critically, what we are witnessing is not a global but a partial transition. The transition from the old system of sovereignty to a new humanitarian order is confined to those states defined as "failed" or "rogue" states. The result is once again a bifurcated system, whereby state sovereignty obtains in large parts of the world but is suspended in more and more countries in Africa and the Middle East.

The Westphalian coin of state sovereignty is still the effective currency in the international system. It is worth looking at both sides of this coin: sovereignty and citizenship. If "sovereignty" remains the password to enter the passageway of international relations, "citizenship" still confers membership in the sovereign national political (state) community. Sovereignty and citizenship are not opposites; they go together. The state, after all, embodies the key political right of citizens: the right of collective self-determination.

The international humanitarian order, in contrast, does not acknowledge citizenship. Instead, it turns citizens into wards. The language of humanitarian intervention has cut its ties with the language of citizen rights. To the extent the global humanitarian order claims to stand for rights, these are residual rights of the human and not the full range of rights of the citizen. If the rights of the citizen are pointedly political, the rights of the human pertain to sheer survival; they are summed up in one word: protection. The new language refers to its subjects not as bearers of rights—and thus active agents in their emancipation—but as passive beneficiaries of an external "responsibility to protect." Rather than rights-bearing citizens, beneficiaries of the humanitarian order are akin to recipients of charity. Humanitarianism does not claim

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to reinforce agency, only to sustain bare life. If anything, its tendency is to promote dependence. Humanitarianism heralds a system of trusteeship.

It takes no great intellectual effort to recognize that the responsibility to protect has always been the sovereign's obligation. It is not that a new principle has been introduced; rather, its terms have been radically altered. To grasp this shift, we need to ask: who has the responsibility to protect whom, under what conditions and toward what end?

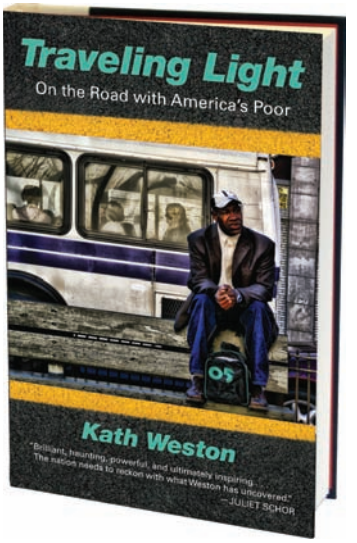
The era of the international humanitarian order is not entirely new. It draws on the history of modern Western colonialism. At the outset of colonial expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, leading Western powers—Britain, France, Russia—claimed to protect "vulnerable groups." When it came to countries controlled by rival powers, such as the Ottoman Empire, Western powers claimed to protect populations they considered vulnerable, mainly religious minorities like specific Christian denominations and Jews. In lands not yet colonized by any power, like South Asia and large parts of Africa, they highlighted local atrocities—such as female infanticide and suttee in India, and slavery in Africa—and pledged to protect victims from their rulers.

From this history was born the international regime of trusteeship exercised under the League of Nations. The League's trust territories were mainly in Africa and the Middle East. They were created at the end of World War I, when colonies of defeated imperial powers (the Ottoman Empire, Germany and Italy) were handed over to the victorious powers, who pledged to administer them as guardians would administer wards, under the watchful eye of the League of Nations.

One of these trust territories was Rwanda, administered as a trust of Belgium until the 1959 Hutu Revolution. It was under the benevolent eye of the League of Nations that Belgium hardened Hutu and Tutsi into racialized identities, using the force of law to institutionalize an official system of discrimination between them. Thereby, Belgian colonialism laid the institutional groundwork for the genocide that followed half a century later. The Western powers that constituted the League of Nations could not hold Belgium accountable for the way it exercised an international trust, for one simple reason: to do so would have been to hold a mirror up to their own colonial record. Belgian rule in Rwanda was but a harder version of the indirect rule practiced to one degree or another by all Western powers in Africa. This system did not simply deny sovereignty to its colonies; it redesigned the administrative and political life of colonies by bringing each under a regime of group identity and rights. Belgian rule in Rwanda may have been an extreme version of colonialism, but it certainly was not exceptional.

Given the record of the League of Nations, it is worth asking how the new international regime of trusteeship would differ from the old one. What are the likely implications of the absence of citizenship rights at the core of this new system? Why would a regime of trusteeship not degenerate yet again into one of lack of accountability and responsibility?

On the face of it, these two systems—one defined by sover-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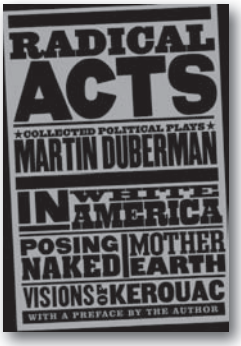

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eignty and citizenship, the other by trusteeship and wardship—would seem to be contradictory rather than complementary. In practice, however, they are two parts of a bifurcated international system. One may ask how this bifurcated order is reproduced without the contradiction being flagrantly obvious, without it appearing like a contemporary version of the old colonial system of trusteeship. A part of the explanation lies in how power has managed to subvert the language of violence and war to serve its own claims.

Subverting the Language of Genocide

War has long ceased to be a direct confrontation between the armed forces of two states. As became clear during the confrontation between the Allied and the Axis powers in World War II, in America's Indochina War in the 1960s and '70s, its Gulf War in 1991 and then again in its 2003 invasion of Iraq, states do not just target the armed forces of adversary states; they target society itself: war-related industry and infrastructure, economy and work force, and sometimes, as in the aerial bombardment of cities, the civilian population in general. The trend is for political violence to become generalized and indiscriminate. Modern war is total war.

This development in the nature of modern war has tended to follow an earlier development of counterinsurgency in colonial contexts. Faced with insurgent guerrillas who were simply armed civilians, colonial powers targeted the populations of occupied territories. When Mao Zedong wrote that guerrillas must be as fish in water, American counterinsurgency theorist Samuel Huntington, writing during the Vietnam War, responded that the object of counterinsurgency must be to drain the water and isolate the fish. But the practice is older than post–World War II counterinsurgency. It dates back to the earliest days of modernity, to settler-colonial wars against American Indians in the decades and centuries that followed 1492. Settler America pioneered the practice of interning civilian populations in what Americans called "reservations" and the British called "reserves," a technology the Nazis would later develop into an extreme form called concentration camps. Often thought of as a British innovation put into effect during the late-nineteenth-century Boer War in South Africa, the practice of concentrating and interning populations in colonial wars was in origin an American settler contribution to the development of modern war.

The regime identified with the international humanitarian order makes a sharp distinction between genocide and other kinds of mass violence. The tendency is to be permissive of insurgency (liberation war), counterinsurgency (suppression of civil war or of rebel/revolutionary movements) and interstate war as integral to the exercise of national sovereignty. Increasingly, they are taken as an inevitable if regrettable part of defending or asserting national sovereignty, domestically or internationally—but not genocide.

What, then, is the distinguishing feature of genocide? It is clearly not extreme violence against civilians, for that is very much a feature of both counterinsurgency and interstate war in these times. Only when extreme violence targets for annihilation a civilian population that is marked off as different "on grounds of race, ethnicity or religion" is that violence termed genocide. It is this aspect of the legal definition that has allowed "genocide" to be instrumentalized by big powers so as to target those newly independent states that they find unruly and want to discipline. More and more, universal condemnation is reserved for only one form of mass violence—genocide—as the ultimate crime, so much so that counterinsurgency and war appear to be normal developments. It is genocide that is violence run amok, amoral, evil. The former is normal violence, but the latter is bad violence. Thus the tendency to call for "humanitarian intervention" only where mass slaughter is named "genocide."

Given that the nature of twentieth-century "indirect rule" colonialism shaped the nature of administrative power along "tribal" (or ethnic) lines, it is not surprising that the exercise of power and responses to it tend to take "tribal" forms in newly independent states. From this point of view, there is little to distinguish between mass violence unleashed against civilians in Congo, northern Uganda, Mozambique, Angola, Darfur, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast and so on. So which ones are to be named "genocide" and which ones are not? Most important, who decides?

No one should be surprised that the United States used its position as the leading power in the Security Council to capture the ICC.

There is nothing new in legal concepts being used to serve the expedience of great powers. What is new about the "war on terror" is that action against certain forms of violence is simultaneously being moralized and legally deregulated. Is it then surprising that these very developments have led to violence run amok, as in Iraq after 2003 or, indeed, in Bashir's own little war on terror in Darfur in 2003–04? As the new humanitarian order does away with legal limits to pre-emptive war—thus, to the global war on terror—it should not be surprising that counterinsurgency defines itself as a local war on terror.

The year 2003 saw the unfolding of two counterinsurgencies. One was in Iraq, and it grew out of foreign invasion. The other was in Darfur, and it grew as a response to an internal insurgency. The former involved a liberation war against a foreign occupation; the latter, a civil war in an independent state. True, if you were an Iraqi or a Darfuri, there was little difference between the brutality of the violence unleashed in either instance. Yet much energy has been invested in how to define the brutality in each instance: whether as counterinsurgency or as genocide. We have the astonishing spectacle of the state that has perpetrated the violence in Iraq, the United States, branding an adversary state, Sudan, the one that has perpetrated genocidal violence in Darfur. Even more astonishing, we had a citizens' movement in America calling for a humanitarian intervention in Darfur while keeping mum about the violence in Iraq.

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The International Criminal Court

The emphasis on big powers as the protectors of rights internationally is increasingly being twinned with an emphasis on big powers as enforcers of justice internationally. This much is clear from a critical look at the short history of the International Criminal Court.

The ICC was set up by treaty in Rome in 1998 to try the world's most heinous crimes: mass murder and other systematic abuses. The relationship between the ICC and successive US administrations is instructive: it began with Washington criticizing the ICC and then turning it into a useful tool. The effort has been bipartisan: the first attempts to weaken the ICC and to create US exemptions from an emerging regime of international justice were made by leading Democrats during the Clinton Administration.

Washington's concerns were spelled out in detail by a subsequent Republican ambassador to the UN, John Bolton: "Our main concern should be for our country's top civilian and military leaders, those responsible for our defense and foreign policy." Bolton went on to ask "whether the United States was guilty of war crimes for its aerial bombing campaigns over Germany and Japan in World War II" and answered in the affirmative: "Indeed, if anything, a straightforward reading of the language probably indicates that the court would find the United States guilty. A fortiori, these provisions seem to imply that the United States would have been guilty of a war crime for dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is intolerable and unacceptable." He also aired the concerns of America's principal ally in the Middle East, Israel: "Thus, Israel justifiably feared in Rome that its preemptive strike in the Six-Day War almost certainly would have provoked a proceeding against top Israeli officials. Moreover, there is no doubt that Israel will be the target of a complaint concerning conditions and practices by the Israeli military in the West Bank and Gaza."

When it came to signing the treaty, Washington balked. Once it was clear that it would not be able to keep the ICC from becoming a reality, the Bush Administration changed tactics and began signing bilateral agreements with countries whereby both signatories would pledge not to hand over each other's nationals—even those accused of crimes against humanity—to the ICC. By mid-June 2003, the United States had signed such agreements with thirty-seven countries, starting with Sierra Leone, a site of massive atrocities.

The Bush Administration's next move was accommodation, made possible by the kind of pragmatism practiced by the ICC's leadership. The fact of mutual accommodation between the world's only superpower and an international institution struggling to find its feet on the ground is clear if we take into account the four countries where the ICC has launched its investigations: Sudan, Uganda, Central African Republic and Congo. All are places where the United States has no major objection to the course chartered by ICC investigations. Its name notwithstanding, the ICC is rapidly turning into a Western court to try African crimes against humanity. It has targeted governments that are US adversaries and ignored actions the United States doesn't oppose, like those of Uganda and Rwanda in eastern Congo, effectively conferring impunity on them.

If the ICC is accountable, it is to the Security Council, not the General Assembly. It is this relationship that India objected to when it—like the United States, China and Sudan—refused to sign the Rome Statute. India's primary objection was summed up by the *Hindu*, India's leading political daily, which argued that "granting powers to the Security Council to refer cases to the ICC, or to block them, was unacceptable, especially if its members were not all signatories to the treaty," for it "provided escape routes for those accused of serious crimes but with clout in the U.N. body." At the same time, "giving the Security Council power to refer cases from a non-signatory country to the ICC was against the Law of Treaties under which no country can be bound by the provisions of a treaty it has not signed."

The absence of formal political accountability has led to the informal politicization of the ICC. No one should be surprised that the United States used its position as the leading power in the Security Council to advance its bid to capture the ICC. This is how the *Hindu* summed up the US relationship to the court: "The wheeling-dealing by which the U.S. has managed to maintain its exceptionalism to the ICC while assisting 'to end the climate of impunity in Sudan' makes a complete mockery of the ideals that informed the setting up of a permanent international criminal court to try perpetrators of the gravest of crimes against humanity."

> If peace and justice are to be complementary rather than conflicting objectives, we must distinguish victors' justice from survivors' justice.

Law and Politics in Transitional Societies

Human rights fundamentalists argue for an international legal standard regardless of the political context of the country in question. Their point of view is bolstered by the widespread and understandable popular outrage, not just in the West but throughout Africa, against the impunity with which a growing number of regimes have been resorting to slaughter to brutalize their populations into silence. The realization that the ICC has tended to focus only on African crimes, and mainly on crimes committed by adversaries of the United States, has introduced a note of sobriety into the African discussion, raising concerns about a politicized justice and wider questions about the relationship between law and politics.

In no country is the distinction between legal and political issues self-evident. In a democracy, the domain of the legal is defined through the political process. What would happen if we privileged the legal over the political, regardless of context? The experience of a range of transitional societies—post-Soviet, postapartheid and postcolonial—suggests that such a fundamentalism would call into question their politi-

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cal existence. Several post-Soviet societies of Eastern Europe with a history of extensive informing, spying and compromising have decided either not to fully open secret police and Communist Party files or to do so at a snail's pace. Societies torn apart by civil war, like post-Franco Spain, have chosen amnesia over truth, for the simple reason that they have prioritized the need to forge a future over agreeing on the past. The contrast is provided by Bosnia and Rwanda, where the administration of justice became an international responsibility and the decision to detach war crimes from the underlying political reality has turned justice into a regime for settling scores.

Those who face human rights as the language of an externally driven "humanitarian intervention" have to contend with a legal regime where the content of human rights law is defined outside a political process—whether democratic or not—that includes them as formal participants. Particularly for those in Africa, the ICC heralds a regime of legal and political dependence, much as the postwar Bretton Woods institutions began to pioneer an international regime of economic dependence in the 1980s and '90s. The real danger of detaching the legal from the political regime and handing it over to human rights fundamentalists is that it will turn the pursuit of justice into revenge-seeking, thereby obstructing the search for reconciliation and a durable peace. Does that mean that the very notion of justice must be postponed as disruptive of peace? No.

Survivors' Justice

If peace and justice are to be complementary rather than conflicting objectives, we must distinguish victors' justice from survivors' justice: if one insists on distinguishing right from wrong, the other seeks to reconcile different rights. In a situation where there is no winner and thus no possibility of victors' justice, survivors' justice may indeed be the only form of justice possible.

If Nuremberg is the paradigm for victors' justice, South Africa's postapartheid transition is the paradigm for survivors' justice. The end of apartheid was driven by a key principle: forgive but do not forget. The first part of the compact was that the new power will forgive all past transgressions so long as they are publicly acknowledged as wrongs. There will be no prosecutions. The second was that there will be no forgetting and that henceforth rules of conduct must change, thereby ensuring a transition to a postapartheid order. It was South Africa's good fortune that its transition was in the main internally driven.

South Africa is not a solitary example but a prototype for conflicts raging across Africa about the shape of postcolonial political communities and the definition of membership in them. The agreement that ended the South Sudan war combined impunity for all participants with political reform. The same was true of the settlement ending Mozambique's civil war. Had the ICC been involved in these conflicts in the way it is now in Darfur, it is doubtful there would be peace in either place. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

Rights Watch's principal China researcher at the time, I was responsible for Han's case from his arrest in June 1989 onward and helped plan his 1992 visit to the United States. The SEIU was not involved.
Robin Munro

Parenti Replies

Brooklyn, N.Y.
Han told me that SEIU 1199 took care of him in New York, "near Columbia," as he put it. My apologies to others crucial to his case; I didn't mean to shortchange their efforts. In any event, it was good that Han had allies, just as continuing support is appreciated by Chinese labor activists now.
Christian Parenti

Loving Rachel Maddow!

Highland Park, Ill.
Even Rebecca Traister's excellent "Mad for Rachel Maddow" [Aug. 18/25] did not fully capture the outstanding traits that make Maddow the most informative commentator on radio and TV. Her depth and breadth of knowledge, engaging personality and unique people skills make her my favorite commentator.
Edward L. Koven

Stony Brook, N.Y.
Ever since I started listening to Rachel Maddow on Air America, I've been impressed by her cogent analysis of events. I guess I was not alone in noticing her uniqueness. Her only negative: she's "not fond of animals." (Who's perfect?)
Fabio Angeli

Not *My* Commander in Chief

Howard, Ohio
I intended to write commenting on the pertinent letter from Doug Wichert ["Soap Out Your Mouth," Sept. 1/8] about the insidious ploy of the President claiming the ubiquitous power of Commander in Chief over this nation. I was going to point out that prior to August 6, 1948—the day I enlisted in the US Army as a paratrooper and a sergeant explained that my ass was now his—I had no Commander in Chief. The day I left the Army, May 5, 1952, I again had no Commander in Chief.

I was going to say that all through the travesty of the Bush Administration, every time I've sat before my television and heard Bush claim that mantle of absolute tyranny, I've wanted to launch my tired old frame out of my easy chair and drive my fist right through the ceiling. I've craved to be able to stare straight into his shifty, conniving eyes and inform him that he is my servant, hired temporarily to execute the laws of the land as laid down by those who were sent to Congress to represent me; that I had not risked my life for nine months of combat in Korea to return to the States and subject my being to the caprices of a monomaniacal, megalomaniacal, paranoiac, sociopathic, pea-brained draft dodger who would have to strain his intellect to be a mediocre county commissioner.

This is what I was going to say—until I discovered that your Letters page is limited to those who have access to the Internet. Life is complicated enough in this savage, convoluted culture. I have fought my battles. Cancel my subscription.
Lloyd Reinbeau

We assure Mr. Reinbeau, and all our readers, that we publish letters whether they arrive by hand, US Postal Service, e-mail, carrier pigeon, oxcart or dog sled. —*Ed.*

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Books & the Arts.

AN INKY, WELL-PANELED PLACE

by D.D. GUTTENPLAN

For a long time I used to go to bed early. Unbidden by my parents I'd hurry up the stairs to my room, turn out the light, burrow beneath the covers, reach under the bed for the flashlight and then, safe where I'd left it the night before, the latest issue of *Superman* or *Batman*. Proust can keep his madeleines. For me, nothing brings back that childhood sensation of safety, or the inky smell of clandestine pleasure, quite like *Batman* No. 166, "Two-Way Death-trap!" in which the caped crime fighter, confiding the details of a nightmare to Robin, is overheard by a villain who proceeds to turn Batman's fevered dream into deadly reality. Or the next issue, No. 167, with "Zero Hour for Earth"—a "book-length spy-thriller" in which Batman jets off to fight the criminal organization Hydra.

I was 7 years old, undergoing weekly chemotherapy at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The side effects of the treatment were unpleasant, and since I couldn't keep down an ice cream cone or a slice of pie, my parents would give me a quarter to spend on comic books. At 12 cents apiece, it didn't take long to amass a considerable library of my favorites; even now I can remember Batman's narrow escape from the Deathtrap and the temple that, in retrospect, must have been based on Angkor Wat—in 1964 Cambodia was a peaceful haven. And though I long ago moved on to other forms of escapist entertainment, I still know more about Superman's double life than I'd care to admit.

Why? Because there was always something slightly shameful about comics. "Yellow journalism" was originally "Yellow Kid Journalism"—a reference to the nightshirt-wearing protagonist of "Hogan's Alley," a comic strip that began in 1896 in the pages of Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and ran until the kid's creator, Richard Outcault, was lured away by William Randolph Hearst. In the 1920s and '30s, even before comic strips migrated from the daily newspaper or the Sunday "rotogravure" section to proper comic books, comic heroes and heroines were being drafted into "Tijuana Bibles"—eight-page pornographic pamphlets featuring familiar characters like Wimpy and Olive Oyl or Maggie and Jiggs in unfamiliar postures. "Without the Tijuana Bibles there would never have been a Mad magazine," Art Spiegelman has observed, adding, "Looking back from the present, a time simultaneously more liberated and more repressed than the decades that came before, it's difficult to conjure up the anarchic depth-charge of the Forbidden that those little dirty comics once carried." Throw in the notion that superhero comics are essentially kid stuff, and the equally widespread certainty—until recently a truth universally acknowledged—that comic books were irredeemably low-brow in conception and execution, and there were reasons to be abashed.

Like so much else in cold war America, comic books emerged from the shadows in the 1960s. By the middle of that decade my beloved DC heroes had been surpassed, at least in popularity, by the angst-ridden horde of maladjusted Marvel mutants, including the Fantastic Four (1961), with superpowers derived from exposure to cosmic rays; Spider-Man (1962), who gains superpowers from the bite of a radioactive spider; and the X-Men (1963), mutants from birth whose powers typically become manifest at puberty. Mainstream comics were well into their Silver Age. At about the same time, artists

The Ten-Cent Plague
The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America.
By David Hajdu.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 434 pp. $26.

Reading Comics
How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean.
By Douglas Wolk.
Da Capo. 405 pp. Paper $16.95.

D.D. Guttenplan writes from The Nation*'s London bureau. In the Marvel universe he is a reporter in* The Punisher: An Eye for an Eye.

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like Spiegelman, Vaughan Bode, R. Crumb and Spain Rodriguez began to write and draw what would become known as "underground comics." With their giddy mix of sex, drugs, sacrilege and rock 'n' roll, underground comics are an essential link between the juvenile antics of spandex-clad superheroes and such eminently respectable contemporary auteurs as Marjane Satrapi, Chris Ware, Daniel Clowes and, of course, Spiegelman. But to say that underground comics marked a triumphant return of the repressed raises a number of questions. Repressed by whom? Why? And what exactly did comics need to emerge from?

Their own Two-Way Deathtrap or, as David Hajdu explains in *The Ten-Cent Plague*, the Great Comic Book Scare. "In the mid-1940s," writes Hajdu, "the comic book was the most popular form of entertainment in America. Comics were selling between eighty million and a hundred million copies every week, with a typical issue passed along or traded to six to ten readers, thereby reaching more people than movies, television, radio, or magazines for adults." The industry provided permanent employment to well over a thousand men and women, many of them, as Hajdu says, "members of racial, ethnic, and social minorities who turned to comics because they thought of themselves or their ideas as unwelcome in the more reputable spheres of publishing and entertainment." Comics also offered steady pay to writers with loftier ambitions. Stanley Kauffman, *The New Republic*'s film critic, churned out Captain Marvel scripts to pay the bills, and when he quit Fawcett in the mid 1940s, the aspiring novelist Patricia Highsmith took his place.

Comics may be older than the movies, but they haven't yet found their *Cahiers du cinéma*.

By the end of 1954 the party was over. That April, writes Hajdu, just as New Jersey Republican Senator Robert Hendrickson "concluded his inquiry into comic books and juvenile delinquency, in New York, Joseph McCarthy began his probe into alleged Communist infiltration of the Army, in Washington. Both sessions were decisive, but in contrary ways." The Army-McCarthy hearings were the beginning of the end for Wisconsin's Grand Inquisitor. Hendrickson had better luck; the ensuing combination of public pressure, religious fervor (schools and scout troops across the country staged comic-book bonfires), local legislation (more than a dozen states outlawed the sale of violent or obscene comics) and national exposure drove many comics publishers out of business. Even *The Nation*, which opposed an outright ban, stopped well short of embracing the condemned publications. "Comic books are an opening wedge," the magazine warned. "If they can be 'purified'…newspapers, periodicals, books, films, and everything else will follow." Nevertheless, the magazine harrumphed, "a generation of Americans has been driven several degrees toward illiteracy by the 'comic' book," and found it "appalling that 60,000,000 comic books are sold in this country every month."

Given that *The Nation*'s circulation at the time was around 20,000, a certain amount of envy may have curbed the magazine's enthusiasm. And with defenders like *The Nation*, most comics publishers understandably declined the chance to become martyrs to free speech, opting instead for public recantation and self-censorship under the hastily devised Comics Code. Charles Murphy, the former New York City municipal court judge who administered the code, put an end to busty superheroines but allowed the men to bulge "in costumes that amounted to skin paint," Hajdu writes; Murphy also banned all stories that might "create disrespect for established authority." The Rawhide Kid lost his bullwhip, then Dick Ayers, who drew the strip, lost his job. From 650 titles in 1954 the industry shrank to fewer than 300, many of them anodyne fare like *Casper the Friendly Ghost* aimed exclusively at young children. More than 800 artists and writers laid off during the panic never worked in comics again.

As in *Positively 4th Street* (2001), Hajdu's account of the intertwined lives, loves and musical careers of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Richard Fariña and Mimi Fariña, *The Ten-Cent Plague* is an intrepid excavation of pop-cultural history. Hajdu didn't just interview the victims; he tracked down newsstand owners, a number of the young book burners—even the chair of the American Legion's "Book Swap," which offered children who turned in their comics a choice of approved reading like *Heidi* or *The Swiss Family Robinson*. *The Ten-Cent Plague* unravels the Comic Book Scare with novelistic flair and great sympathy for people whose only crime was "to tell outrageous stories in cartoon pictures."

When it comes to extracting some deeper meaning from this four-color tragedy, however, Hajdu is less resourceful. "The panic over comic books falls somewhere between the Red Scare and the frenzy over UFO sightings among the pathologies of postwar America," he writes. That's an awfully big "between," and though he clearly hopes to invoke some kind of parallel with the Hollywood inquisition, Hajdu seems lost among the anecdotes. What made *Naming Names* (1980) unforgettable was Victor Navasky's insistent focus on the moral choices forced on those caught up in the blacklist: to inform or not, to break with the Communist Party or not, to defy the blacklisters or not, to keep faith with former comrades when you no longer believed in the cause—or not. It may be that Hajdu feels it would be inappropriate to ask such questions of the cheerfully amoral purveyors of titles like *Tales From the Crypt*, *The Haunt of Fear* and *It Rhymes With Lust*. Or perhaps he was just reluctant to put his sources on the spot. When Stan Lee tells Hajdu that firing the entire staff of dozens of Timely/Atlas/Marvel titles "was the toughest thing I ever did in my life," he isn't pressed on whether collaboration with the censor was inevitable—or even whether, when Marvel's fortunes revived in the 1960s, he made any effort to rehire the artists he'd put out on the street. Though prepared to indict "the reckless extremism of horror comics," Hajdu also caricatures Fredric Wertham, author of *Seduction of the Innocent* and the scourge of horror comics, as a pseudo-scientific charlatan with "an ear for the headlines and an eye for the spotlight." Wertham's insistence that comics contributed to juvenile delinquency makes him an easy target, but the psychologist was also the founder of a free clinic in Harlem, a good friend of writers Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright, and in general a far more complex character than Hajdu's—pardon the expression—cartoon villain.

More significant is Hajdu's inability to anchor his material historically. At first he seems to be going for the class angle: "Unlike movements in the fine arts that crossed class lines to evoke the lives of working people, newspaper comics were proletarian in a contained, inclusive way." Later on, having established the middle-class, even suburban, aspirations of most comics artists, he describes "the sentiment against comics [as] a kind of anti-anti-elitism, a campaign by protectors of rarified ideals of literacy, sophistication and virtue to rein in the practitioners of a wild, homegrown form of vernacular American expression." Though the prose is characteristically felicitous, this description seems amiss as a reckoning of either the Catholic Church or the book burners—or of practitioners like Mickey Spillane (who told Hajdu "a kid's dime buys the same cup of coffee") and the often cynical businessmen

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who employed them. At least Hajdu mentions the Zoot Suit riots—street fights between servicemen and Mexican-American civilians in East Los Angeles in 1943. But apart from a nod to Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, America's periodic hand-wringing about juvenile delinquency, and the underlying anxiety over race and class, remain offstage.

Also missing is a sense of the cultural context. The Comic Book Scare is only one round in a contest that stretches back to the temperance crusaders of the nineteenth century. In their wake came polite revulsion over "scandal sheets" like *The Police Gazette*, Progressive reformers' concerns about nickelodeons and concert saloons and the crackdown on burlesque, the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930, the furor over Elvis Presley's pelvis and Chuck Berry's mixed-race audience, and today's campaigns against violent computer games and obscene rap lyrics. Hajdu vividly conveys how a Dexedrine-fueled Bill Gaines at EC Comics vowed to defy the censors and in the process nearly destroyed his company, which was saved, ironically, by the decision to skirt the Comics Code and publish *Mad* as a magazine—meaning that unsold copies, unlike comic books, could be returned. But why each generation seems to produce its own Tipper Gore, and whether the rest of us really need to applaud the use of such powerful lures as sex and violence to enlist teenagers in consumer culture, are not questions Hajdu asks. Nor does he recognize that the same American jitters that made and unmade EC's fortunes also animated film noir: 1944, the historical peak of comic book sales, was also the year of *Double Indemnity*. Anyone seeking a clued-up look at how the beginnings of the cold war registered in popular culture would still do better to pick up Peter Biskind's *Seeing Is Believing* (1983) or, for those with some tolerance for sociology, Warren Susman's equally durable essay "Did Success Spoil the United States?"

Despite its subtitle, Douglas Wolk's *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean* is not really a work of theory. Like his previous book, *James Brown's "Live at the Apollo,"* a 117-page commentary on the live album of a concert that took place eight years before Wolk was born, it is, rather, an act of critical devotion. As a critic, Wolk isn't particularly interested in the ironies of history; nor does his reading of comics pretend to much interest in the world outside the panel borders. His concern is with what Harold Bloom called "the questions of good and bad and how and why."

The practice of asking such questions about comics is as old as the funnies. Rodolphe Topffer, the nineteenth-century Swiss artist usually cited as the originator of the comic strip, was also the author of "Essay on Physiognomy," an attempt to explain his creation. Will Eisner, a legendary figure whose career stretched from superhero comics in the 1930s to *The Spirit*, the first modern comic for adults, in the 1940s (when he was assisted by the young Jules Feiffer) to a graphic novel about *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, published in 2005, also wrote his own manifesto, *Comics and Sequential Art*. Wolk, like Hajdu, clearly worships Eisner, and also tips his hat to cartoonist Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (1993). But Wolk's focus, as he says, is "the reader's side of the comics experience: figuring out how we experience them in general and looking carefully at particular artists and works."

Wolk has smart, intelligible things to say about how we make sense of comics—not as a genre or literary form but as a medium in its own right. His remarks on the relationship between "the cartoonist's line, [which] defines the shape of the comics image," and a cartoonist's visual style demonstrate an attractive willingness to get down to the mechanics. And if his insight that "virtually every major superhero franchise…can be looked at in terms of a particular metaphor that underscores all of its best stories" doesn't quite make him the Stanley Fish of the pen-and-ink pantheon, it does allow him some engaging riffs, like his observation that *X-Men*, with its perpetual arguments between the assimilationist mutants and the militant separatists, is "on some level" an allegory "about difference and identity politics." Best of all, having developed this little "superhero as metaphor" scheme, Wolk admits it doesn't really apply to Superman, Batman or Wonder Woman—which is like developing a law of planetary motion that doesn't apply to Earth, Jupiter or Saturn.

Wolk is, in other words, an honest critic, and one who reminds me of two other honest critics of a once-new form: Greil Marcus and Robert Christgau. Like Marcus, Wolk is unafraid of ideas, even theoretical ideas; like Christgau, whose sheer enthusiasm for rock 'n' roll I find infectious even though it has been years since I've had any idea what the bands he's writing about sound like, Wolk seems willing to persist in his devotion to this upstart medium long after his peers have moved on to more prestigious pursuits.

Perhaps because he's still writing from inside it, Wolk adeptly explains comics as a subculture. He doesn't let the self-perpetuating male "comics guy" mentality off the hook, either—for a time he wrote a web column in drag just to bait the misogynists. But he shows that for both male and female adherents, the self-referential sense of tribal belonging is at least as important to the pleasure of comic books as the wish fulfillment of superhero stories or the bohemian *frisson* of "outsider" books like *Ghost World* and *Love & Rockets*. As Wolk points out, comics "that are incomprehensible to anyone not already immersed in their culture aren't just the norm now; they're the point. If you pick up a story crammed full of insider references, and you're enough of an insider to catch them all, you're going to feel like it was made just for you, and it will intensify the sense of difference between you and non-comics readers."

The last half of *Reading Comics* is a selection of (mostly) picks and a few pans—comics that Wolk wants to introduce or to think about in greater depth. Many of these seem to be recycled reviews, with the regular reviewer's vices of hype and hypertrophied identification. Or it may just be that I don't share Wolk's taste for Alan Moore's pseudo-profundities or Hope Larson's sub-Chagall dreamscapes. But Wolk is refreshingly irreverent about Will Eisner's weakness for shmaltz-soaked pieties and convincingly scathing about Alex Ross's airbrushed epic pretension. Wolk's reading of *Black Hole*, Charles Burns's body-horror chronicle of a sexually transmitted "bug" that turns mid-1970s Seattle high school students into monsters with tails, or extra mouths, or insectoid heads, is sharp and persuasive and sent me right to Amazon.

For all their passion, Wolk and Hajdu suffer from critical vertigo, a sense that the conversation they want to enter still hasn't been invented. Comics may be older than the movies, but they haven't yet found their *Cahiers du cinéma*, or even their Andrew Sarris and Pauline Kael (though Wolk, who seems to have read both, clearly thinks of himself as Kael-Man). Umberto Eco's "The Myth of Superman" (1972) turns up in lots of cultural studies courses, but Eco's ponderous critique of the continuous present of comic book narratives is, for my money, considerably less interesting than, say, the paradoxical treatment of time travel given in

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Superboy No. 85, where the Boy of Steel, flying faster than the speed of light, heads back in time to April 14, 1864, to prevent Lincoln's assassination—only to be thwarted by the adult villain Lex Luthor, who assumes Superboy has followed him into the past and immobilizes him with a hunk of red Kryptonite. (Unlike the potentially deadly green Kryponite, the effects of red Kryptonite are unpredictable.) Eco's point about the conflict between Superman's "fixed" character and the need to find "new narrative stimuli" seems banal next to the pathos of the boy superhero's inability to alter history.

Like formal poetry, comic books spatialize the sense of time. Running over successive panels or pages, the comics narrative makes the fourth dimension visible—and subject to revision. Eco hints at this when he observes that in *Superman* "the narrator picks up the strand of the event again and again, as if he had forgotten to say something and wanted to add details to what has already been said." But in assuming that this narrative tic is a measure of comics readers' inattentiveness, Eco displays a condescension fatal to understanding. Indeed, it might be said that the foregrounding of this process, known to comics fans as retrospective continuity, or "retcon," is the distinguishing feature of modern superhero comics. Used creatively, retcons reconcile comics tradition and the writer's individual talent. But retcon also lets a lazy writer tie up loose ends—or justify reviving a character, or a whole franchise. Comics are, after all, a business, and if you can sell a few hundred thousand more copies of *The Flash* by bringing its hero back from the recycling pile, why not?

Commercial considerations may also have been responsible for the proliferation of the comics multiverse. Despite the pretense that DC heroes come from Smallville, Metropolis and Gotham City, Superman and Batman started out in a world recognizable as our own. Over the decades, however, the cumulative effect of numerous plot twists and retcons was to situate the action in a series of alternate universes whose complex relations eventually broke down, producing DC's "Crisis on Infinite Earths." Marvel handled matters somewhat differently, with all action originally taking place in a single fictional "Marvel Universe" but, beginning in the late 1960s, slowly shifting the scenery toward an actual present-day New York.

What's new is the extent to which the comics cosmos has become our own. In the past it was just Superman and Lois Lane (or Batman and Robin) shacked up in the DC multiverse—or Reed Richards and Sue Storm in the Marvel universe. Now comics are all around us. From *Persepolis* on the big screen to NBC's hit show *Heroes* (which takes not only its characters but its story arcs from comic books) to this summer's "Superheroes" show at the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute to the respectful review recently accorded a four-volume collection of Jack Kirby's late work by *The New York Times Book Review* to the boffo box-office record set by *The Dark Knight*, comics have moved beyond marginality to become perhaps the dominant cultural form. *Maus* reaches millions of readers who would never pick up Raul Hilberg—and some, their historical curiosity and moral imaginations engaged by Spiegelman's theater of cruelty, who now will.

As Wolk says, comics are "full of enticing blank spaces, in both space and time, for readers to decorate in our minds.... The job of the cartoonist, in any case, is to make the reader do most of the imaginative work of moving from panel to panel through the narrative, but to make that work as engaging as possible." Perhaps it is this necessity of doing the work that is the source of the medium's new ubiquity—and for the enduring hold of comics on readers' imaginations. Perhaps it really all comes down to the space between the panels.

Though easy to overlook, the space between the panels is the reader's point of entry, the place where the imagination does its work. Of course, novels and paintings also engage the imagination. And moviegoers are not an entirely passive audience. But comics bring you much closer to the action. And after *Maus*, no subject is taboo—or too big, not even, as Joe Sacco's brilliant reportage has shown, the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Wolk claims the whole medium is on the cusp of another Golden Age, an efflorescence of narrative daring and graphic creativity to rival the pre–Comics Code era. When it comes to superheroes I'm dubious; today's caped crusaders seem too freighted with their history, too aware of their limitations, to rival the heroic figures I remember. But readers who prefer the "real world" now have plenty of choices, from Marguerite Abouet's straight-out-of-Africa picaresque *Aya* to Guy Delisle's *Shenzen* to Marjane Satrapi's latest installment of life in exile. And though I don't particularly like the term "graphic novel," there are some amazing storytellers out there finding new ways to draw us in—and keep us close.

In that sense, at least, Dr. Wertham was right. Comics have become a very powerful medium. And as Spider-Man reminds us, with great power comes great responsibility. ■

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Statue of Giordano Bruno in Rome's Campo de' Fiori

A Hungry Mind

by PAULA FINDLEN

Giordano Bruno
Philosopher/Heretic.
By Ingrid D. Rowland.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 335 pp. $27.

In the heart of Campo de' Fiori, one of Rome's oldest marketplaces, stands a statue of a solemnly hooded figure. Wrists bound, a book clasped in his right hand, his face virtually obscured by his cowl, he interjects a melancholy and reflective note into the otherwise irrepressible atmosphere of this famous piazza. Looking more closely, we see the philosopher Giordano Bruno, who died in this piazza on February 17, 1600, as his admirers wanted us to see him when they erected this statue, with the support of Rome's city council, on June 9, 1889—as Italy's most famous heretic after Galileo, a figure transformed into a political and intellectual icon by a young and radicalized Italian nation, which proclaimed its political secularism and liberalism, and recent acquisi-

Paula Findlen, a professor of history at Stanford University, is the author of Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy *and the editor of* Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything.

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tion of Rome, in plain view of the Vatican.

The historian John Bossy once described Bruno as Italy's Joan of Arc. This is an apt metaphor, up to a point. Bruno did indeed become a martyr to his beliefs, though his battles were fought with words rather than arms. His death, however, was of his own choosing, and it was a choice he came to in the course of his lengthy trial at the hands of the Roman Inquisition, not far from where Bernini's elephant now sits beneath the obelisk in Piazza Santa Maria sopra Minerva. The vast majority of heretics chose to abjure and repent rather than die, and this of course is what the church preferred, even in the sixteenth century, since restoring faith was a more powerful and persuasive message than executing the unorthodox. Bruno never recanted his beliefs. The Holy Office, under the leadership of the deeply learned and pious Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, declared him a relapsed heretic. Tongue bound or possibly pierced to prevent him from speaking, stripped naked and formally defrocked as a Dominican—he had been excommunicated from this order for almost twenty-five years at the time of his death—Bruno was burned on a pyre in Campo de' Fiori.

Just as today the rainbow-colored flags of peace hang from many Roman windows to protest the war in Iraq, on that second Sunday of June in 1889, while good Catholics celebrated Pentecost, Campo de' Fiori was festooned with flags bearing Masonic symbols. Fiery speeches were made by politicians, scholars and atheists about the importance of commemorating Bruno as one of the most original and oppressed freethinkers of his age. The spirit of the tribute reflected the fact that the idea of honoring Bruno by erecting a statue in the very piazza of his immolation was not simply a Roman or even an Italian project. Nineteenth-century philosophers like Hegel rediscovered Bruno's writings on the unity of truth and began to regard him as a forgotten forefather. Bruno's early advocacy of the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus's idea of a heliocentric universe—the subject that precipitated Galileo's trial and condemnation in 1633—also inspired a misguided interpretation of Bruno as a martyr for science. The international committee that supported the installation of Bruno's statue included luminaries of science like Ernst Haeckel and Herbert Spencer, and leading literary figures like Victor Hugo and Henrik Ibsen. All of them saw the commemoration of Bruno as a symbolic victory for reason and progress.

After a day of prayer and fasting, Pope Leo XIII responded with his own interpretation of Bruno. He told the faithful that he considered the man from Nola, a small town east of Naples, to be a willfully unrepentant materialist and pantheist—in short, the embodiment of everything that sought to destroy or diminish the church. No nation that enshrined such a man could represent the Catholic vote. Indeed, two years earlier, when a summary of Bruno's trial had unexpectedly surfaced in the Vatican archives, Leo XIII hid the document. He actively wanted to avoid the kind of controversy that had occurred when the followers of Mazzini, having taken control of the Vatican in 1849, threw open the archives of the Roman Inquisition, symbolically liberating centuries of heretics trapped inside its documents. The surviving—and frustratingly incomplete—documentation of Bruno's trial emerged and was published in 1876. Interpreting these materials became part of the epic struggle between the Roman Catholic Church and its detractors.

Leo XIII, a judicious pope whose encyclical *Rerum Novarum* is one of the foundational documents of twentieth-century Catholicism, was in many respects an open-minded leader who struggled mightily to restore the papacy's tattered reputation. But he did not want further discussion of Bruno to destroy what he was trying to mend. He took the bold step of opening the Vatican archives to researchers, but he also put Bruno's trial summary aside, probably in his personal archive. A later prefect of the Vatican Library, Cardinal Angelo Mercati, rediscovered it in 1940 after a fifteen-year search. By then the vexed question of the Italian state's relationship with the church had been resolved by the mutual diplomacy of Mussolini and Pius XI.

Though a single document had remained hidden for centuries, there was no repressing the sentiments that the figure of Bruno inspired. Following Leo XIII's statements condemning Bruno and his latter-day admirers on June 30, 1889, the Giordano Bruno Society subsequently opened an office a short walk from St. Peter's Square to taunt the Pope with its banners. Politicians were heard to shout "Viva Giordano Bruno!" on the floor of Parliament as the battle cry of a new nation. Every February 17, modern-day Brunisti celebrate his audacity, his capacious intellect and his obstinate refusal to capitulate to religious orthodoxy. They gather in front of his statue, not far from where he met his grisly end, to pay homage to him as a visionary, philosopher and freethinker. For all these reasons, we too should pause before this monument to one of the most troubled minds of the Renaissance to ask ourselves: who was Bruno, and what did he do to inspire such divided views of his legacy?

Ingrid Rowland's *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic* is an excellent starting point for anyone who wants to rediscover the historical figure concealed beneath a cowl on Campo de' Fiori. Her lively and learned biography removes Bruno from myth and polemic, where he has so often resided, and restores him to the time and place that inspired his dual passion for knowledge as well as faith. She also offers a far richer and multidimensional account of Bruno's peculiar and complex intellectual itinerary than earlier scholars like Frances Yates, who, in her brilliant and influential account *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), depicted him as a great Renaissance magus. She inspired a generation of readers to see him primarily as a Hermetic philosopher devoted to the restoration of Egyptian wisdom. Generously acknowledging the more recent work of Bruno specialists like Hilary Gatti, who have shown us how to read his politics, philosophy, science, plays and poetry seriously, Rowland describes how Bruno became the kind of person who fascinated and alarmed virtually everybody who came into contact with him. She takes us inside his head to see the interplay of theology, philosophy and poetry that shaped his worldview.

The son of a gentleman-soldier from Nola, the young Filippo Bruno took the name of Giordano when he entered the Do-

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minican order in Naples at age 17. Even during his youthful initiation into the mysteries of faith, Bruno seems to have had his doubts. He reportedly stripped his monastery cell bare of all but a crucifix. He later recalled that he had doubted Christ's divinity. But he was intoxicated by the teachings of the church: its great libraries filled with pagan and Christian learning, its charismatic preachers and its appreciation for young men of talent. At 21 Bruno was called to Rome to recite Psalm 86 in Hebrew, forward and backward, for Pope Pius V. He was well launched onto the road to ecclesiastic preferment.

Eventually, however, Bruno's outspoken beliefs caught up with him. In 1575 he fled Naples as rumors about his unorthodox religious beliefs spurred an investigation by his order; he left behind his life as a Dominican—along with a copy of one of the banned commentaries of the Dutch humanist Erasmus in the monks' latrine. Concerns about his heretical denial of the Trinity led Rome to summon him to appear before the Inquisition in 1576. Bruno instead took to the road, an ex-friar in a search of a new life. He would not return to Italy until 1591.

The path Bruno blazed lay at the crossroads of several concurrent movements. The Renaissance expanded the world of texts and transformed them into printed books, ever widening the domain of knowledge for hungry minds like Bruno's. The splintering of Christianity ushered in by the proclamations of Luther, Calvin and many other reformers had slashed a deep wound in the heart of the Roman Catholic Church. Fundamentally, the Reformation raised the question of how to choose among multiple versions of faith. Nothing less than loyalty to the doctrines and institutions of the church was at stake. Every question Bruno asked of his faith led him further away from its center. Finally, important changes in how to understand the natural world—indeed, how to conceive of knowledge itself—were gradually reshaping mankind's understanding of the universe. Bruno was among the first generation of thinkers to contemplate at length the implications of the Scientific Revolution. A product of the age of Copernicus, he was nonetheless a witness and, for some, a prophet of the era of Galileo.

Rowland aptly describes Bruno as having led a picaresque life. He wandered from one city to another in search of employment and a better faith while he honed his philosophy. In Geneva he temporarily became a Calvinist and was subsequently excommunicated. In Toulouse he found employment as a professor (we can suppose that they did not check his credentials in Rome). Inevitably, he dreamed of great success in the capital cities of Europe. By 1581 he was in Paris attempting to teach King Henry III and his courtiers one of the many secrets he claimed to possess: the ancient and mysterious art of memory that could enable one to recall knowledge from a series of simple images, symbols and words.

It was in this period of his life that Bruno began to publish, calling himself the "Nolan, the Academic of no Academy." Subsequently Bruno traveled to London, where, Bossy's delightful account of him as a spy in the French ambassador's household in his *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair* (1991) notwithstanding, he seems to have been primarily a philosopher without a country. The English laughed at his thick accent when he lectured at Oxford in the summer of 1583. They found his description of Copernican astronomy utterly incomprehensible. He was just a funny little man from Nola.

Bruno's failure to gain an appreciative audience in person spurred him to put his cosmology on paper. He wrote furiously in the ambassador's house on Butcher Row, offering an allegorical critique of Rome in his *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* and com-

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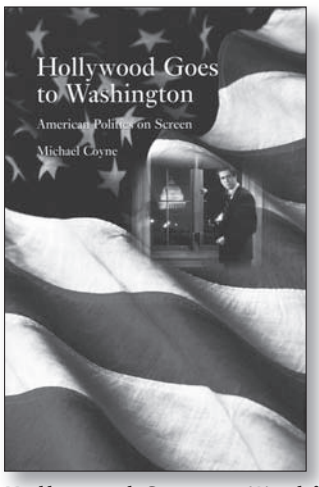

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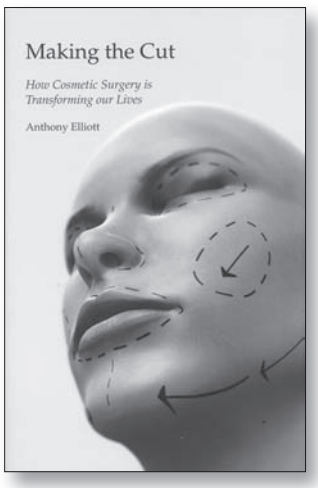

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posing strange and acerbic Italian dialogues, like *The Ash Wednesday Supper*, that vindicated his humiliating experience before the Oxford dons by explaining the promise of the new cosmology through the eyes of the Nolan. As Rowland observes, building on the crucial work of Gatti's *Giordano Bruno and Renaissance Science* (1999), Bruno went far beyond what Copernicus had intended in replacing the earth with the sun as the static point in the universe. Because of the new astronomy, he began to consider the infinite in all of its dimensions. He envisioned a universe populated by many worlds, without center and without end.

Bruno also attempted to address a central problem that Copernicus and his editors had been unable to resolve: how to consider the new cosmology in light of scriptural accounts of nature. Famously anticipating Galileo's argument, he suggested that science and faith were two different but complementary kinds of truth, since each had its own language that was appropriate to its intent. Had his books enjoyed a somewhat wider readership than they seem to have gained—it took the Roman Inquisition several years to acquire even a portion of his publications when it decided to assess them as part of his trial—his argument about complementary truths might have been important.

Rowland's biographical approach to Bruno allows us to see the development of his ideas more clearly in relation to far more personal goals. In Paris in 1585, Bruno's intellectual pride and irascible temperament quickly led him into a series of vitriolic academic quarrels that did little to improve his chances of finding a new position. He continued his exploration of infinity by writing a lengthy Latin poem on this subject. And he began to consider the possibility of reconciling with his church. Preliminary inquiries, however, reminded him of the difficulties he would face. He might have to answer questions about his leave-taking and subsequent activities that he wished to avoid. Still, the image we are left with is that of a man who had surveyed the religious scene in Northern Europe—Calvinist and Anglican—and not yet found a religion he preferred to his own.

In 1586 Bruno left Paris for Germany. He found himself in the heart of Luther's Reformation, and not exactly welcome in its universities. After failed attempts to secure a teaching post in three different towns, he arrived in the more tolerant city of Wittenberg to a somewhat warmer reception. A new series of lectures and publications ensued. Bruno boldly invited listeners to discard everything they thought they knew about how to learn. Doubt knowledge, then find your philosophy, he proclaimed. He offered himself as a seer, calling his books "lamps" to guide the uninitiated on the new path toward wisdom.

Yet by the time he developed these ideas, Bruno was on the road again. The old prince had died, and his son was far less open to employing professors of suspect faith. Bruno headed for Prague and the legendary court of Rudolph II, who collected interesting minds of all kinds—including Kepler, one of Bruno's most perceptive readers, who arrived there in 1600 after his own religious troubles elsewhere. Rudolph was sufficiently intrigued by Bruno to meet him, but no job was forthcoming. The Nolan continued to travel throughout Germany—first to Tübingen, then Helmstedt and Frankfurt, famous for its international book fair—publishing steadily along the way and perfecting his ideas. It is not clear if he actually converted to Lutheranism at this stage, but he became more openly critical of the papacy. A Helmstedt pastor excommunicated him in 1589.

Bruno was a man who had tried all religions and been satisfied with none (nor they with him). But he was increasingly proud of his philosophy. In a series of Latin poems written in 1591, he boldly called for a new logic and a new metaphysics, a radically new system of knowledge to accommodate his vision of the cosmos (a vision later dubbed "The Acentric Labyrinth"). He also began to think about the infinitely small, or the "monad," as the natural complement of infinity. In a different guise, this concept would become the centerpiece of Leibniz's philosophical system in the next century. Rowland skillfully shows us how Bruno developed this idea from his reading of ancient and Renaissance philosophy and used diagrams to convey what neither words nor his more limited mathematical abilities could indicate.

One of the greatest mysteries of Bruno's life concerns his decision to return to Italy in 1591. Why did he take such a risk? In part, as Rowland suggests, he made a calculated move by entering the Venetian Republic, which was known to be religiously tolerant and even antagonistic to Rome. In part, he may have been simply tired of wandering and hopeful that he could finally resolve his troubled relationship with his faith. He briefly taught mathematics at the University of Padua—in an ironic twist of fate, just before the Venetians succeeded in wooing Galileo away from Pisa. He explored the possibility of a papal pardon with an old acquaintance from his days in the Dominican college in Naples. And he made the mistake of giving lessons in the art of memory to a prickly Venetian named Giovanni Mocenigo, who

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denounced him to the Venetian Inquisition in 1592.

Rowland's interesting reconstruction of the next eight years of Bruno's life—seven of them spent in the Roman Inquisition's prison—helps us to see how slowly and deliberately the wheels of justice ground. Despite Bruno's efforts to repent, the Inquisitors were not convinced that he was sincere. While reports of his beliefs were scanty and largely speculative—with hindsight we know far more than they did—his actions were most suspicious. Why had he spent so many years in Protestant countries and published all of his books outside the mechanisms of Catholic censorship? Why hadn't he made more concerted efforts to confess and repent earlier? There were nagging concerns that the skinny little black-bearded man from Nola might indeed be just as the Frankfurt book dealers had described him to some Venetian printers: "a man without religion." And, more to the point, what exactly was in those books?

The lacunae in the trial documents permit only a provisional reconstruction of the final stages of his trial. Cardinal Bellarmine distilled a long list of potential problems into eight accusations of heresy. Bruno had earlier confessed to eating meat on fast days, traveling in Protestant lands, listening to Protestant sermons and reading forbidden books. (One wonders whether he came clean about leaving a volume of Erasmus in the latrine.) He further denied that carnal sin was a mortal sin. None of these issues would have led him to the sentence he eventually received.

Part of the enigma of Bruno lies in the documents we do not have and in the intriguing possibilities of those that have survived. With a detective's eye, Rowland shows us what the evidence might suggest. Bruno's denial of the Trinity and Christ's divinity were grave issues indeed. His fascination with multiple worlds and his understanding of the soul were also topics under discussion by the Inquisitors, though we do not know what their final judgment was of his beliefs on these specific issues. The fact that he had allegedly practiced the art of divination raised questions about to what extent he wished to supplant God's powers with human agency. Bruno argued that these were philosophical questions and not matters of faith. But it is unlikely that this distinction convinced the Inquisitors that his faith was pure.

We do know that the final judgment rendered by Rome accused Bruno of denying the miracle of the Eucharist. No doctrinal issue was more contested between Catholics and Protestants than the question of whether the liturgical re-creation of the Last Supper was a real miracle, a partial miracle or a symbolic meal. Bruno had denied the accusation in Venice, but it persisted in Rome undoubtedly because other evidence that we can no longer see in its entirety—possibly including their reading of his *Ash Wednesday Supper*—persuaded the Inquisitors to take it seriously.

Bruno had a lot to say throughout the trial, but at a certain point he refused to talk further with his Inquisitors. The only judgment he was willing to entertain was that of the Pope, who had no desire to intervene on his behalf. Bruno, in turn, refused to recant the eight accusations. Spurning numerous offers to abjure his beliefs and refusing even the final consolation of gazing at the crucifix, Bruno is said to have darkly proclaimed: "You may be more afraid to bring that sentence against me than I am to accept it." He met his end as a willing martyr to his beliefs.

Bruno embodied the kind of challenging thinker to whom the Roman Catholic Church had no satisfactory response in the age of the Reformation. It can be hard, in retrospect, to understand exactly what was at stake at the end of the sixteenth century, especially when so many modern accounts of him are colored by our perception of the zones of potential conflict between knowledge and faith, and by our view of dissent as freedom of speech, a civil right in a democratic society rather than an expression of disbelief in a world in which there is no formal separation between church and state. Rowland's sympathetic and well-informed portrait of Bruno presents him as far more of a pragmatist, perhaps even unintentionally, than earlier histories have suggested. Her Bruno is not a naïve idealist but a man of ideas running out of options—someone who had, perhaps, put all the words that he could muster onto paper and finally chose to have the denouement of his philosophy, and its implications for faith, occur in front of his Inquisitors.

Rowland concludes her study of Bruno by recounting the many ways his style of writing and modes of thinking persisted beyond his lifetime—in evocative passages in Shakespeare, in the fantastic visions of Kepler and especially Athanasius Kircher, and in the witty prose of Galileo's great and controversial *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (1632). Rowland's Bruno continues to be a somewhat curious heretic: a man who questioned many things without openly denying faith, and who may indeed have sacrificed himself for principles as much as for beliefs. Barring the reappearance of any material about him among the archives spirited away from the Vatican by Napoleon's troops in 1810, the full details of Bruno's heresies will continue to remain a mystery. Isn't that the way he would have wanted it? ■

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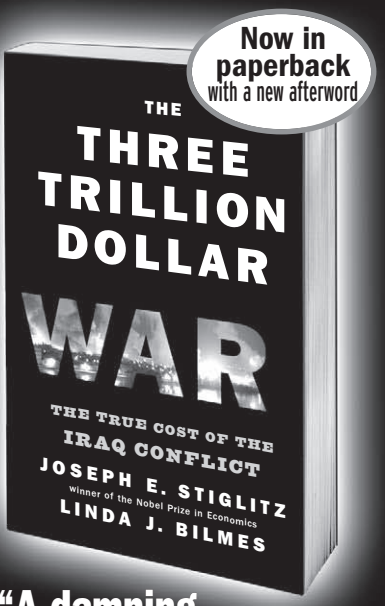
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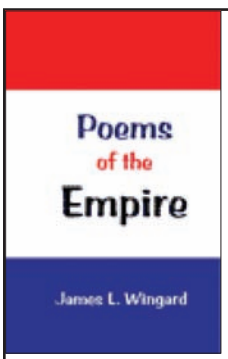

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Amy Winehouse performing at Lollapalooza, August 2007

Tainted Love

by DAPHNE BROOKS

London's Victoria and Albert Museum is currently paying tribute to the Supremes, the queen mother of all "girl groups," in a colorful exhibit that celebrates the more-than-passing connections between the Motown trio's rise to pop prominence and the 1960s struggle for civil rights. Featuring a luminous array of vintage glitter gowns and go-go petal dresses donated by original Supreme Mary Wilson, "The Story of the Supremes" highlights the link between the groundbreaking group's consistent execution of refined elegance and what you might call the civil right to black glamour that was dominant for much of twentieth-century black music history.

English pop phenom and London native Amy Winehouse is a singer who owes as much to the sound and look of the Supremes, the Ronettes and other pioneering girl groups as she does to the vocal stylings of bygone jazz and R&B greats like Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan and Afro-Scottish pop legend Dame Shirley Bassey. On second thought, "owing" is putting it nicely. Winehouse's Tower of Pisa beehive, satin gowns and little black gloves invoke the styles of everyone from Lena Horne to the Shirelles, and her frothy brew of Motown girl-group melodies crossed with Etta James–era rock and blues riffs and silky-smooth 1970s soul arrangements are textbook BET lifetime achievement material. Just about the only thing Winehouse hasn't repackaged from the black music archives is the one thing she could use: a lesson from Motown's legendary etiquette coach Maxine Powell, who taught her charges to exude grace and a classic Hollywood glow. The mannered, elegant look that Winehouse pairs with a shot glass was, for Diana Ross, Mary Wilson and Florence Ballard, about more than Cleopatra eyeliner. It was about affirming black dignity and humanity amid the battle to end American apartheid.

Winehouse's infamous image, as anyone who has looked on the Internet lately knows, is less about dignity and more about a march toward Sid Vicious–style self-immolation—a No Future punk-degeneration dreamgirl chic, with a dash of *Funny Girl* Babs thrown in for good measure. What makes this act slightly less than amusing is the fact that Winehouse has built her stardom on recycling the looks and sounds—the Wurlitzer, hand claps and upright bass—of Freedom Ride–era pop music to sell her tale of rapidly unfolding decline. It's one thing in our celeb-

Daphne Brooks is an associate professor of English and African-American studies at Princeton University. She is the author of Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910 *(Duke) and* Jeff Buckley's Grace *(Continuum).*

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reality culture of scandals and bad behavior to garner attention by singing a pop anthem about resisting rehab. It's quite another to set these finely crafted tales from the "gritty" English 'hood to doo-wop hopefulness and buoyant, "Dancing in the Streets" percussive melodies that recall the upbeat tenor of King-era activism. This summer, the dissonance grew deafening when Winehouse was caught on video singing slurs about blacks and Asians—not to mention gays and disabled folk—to the tune of "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" while hanging out in what looked like a crack den. A few weeks later, after issuing the requisite public apology, she slurred her way through the lead vocals of the Special AKA's New Wave radio classic "Free Nelson Mandela" in the presence of the man himself, on the occasion of his ninetieth-birthday celebration in Hyde Park.

It's been a whirlwind year and a half for the 25-year-old Winehouse, whose second album, *Back to Black*, has sold 10 million copies worldwide and who, in February, won five Grammys, including Best New Artist, Record of the Year and Song of the Year. But for every polite critic who cites her work as another example of cultural "borrowing," there are others who would argue that she is another version of Colonel Tom Parker's white chocolate dream—Elvis reincarnated as a white woman who can "sing like a Negress." And while some might get caught up in debating whether Winehouse is merely a hack black-music ventriloquist, the most troubling aspect of her routine is rarely discussed. The real travesty of Winehouse's work is the way that her retro-soul draws from and yet effaces those black women—from Diana Ross to Aretha Franklin to Tina Turner—whose experiences helped to ignite the rock and soul revolution of our contemporary era.

Black women are everywhere and nowhere in Winehouse's work. Their extraordinary craft as virtuosic vocalists is the pulse of *Back to Black*, an album on which Winehouse mixes and matches the vocalizing of 1940s jazz divas and 1990s neo-soul queens in equal measure. Piling on a motley array of personas, she summons the elegance of Etta "At Last" James alongside roughneck, round-the-way allusions to pub crawls and Brixton nightlife, as well as standard pop women's melancholic confessionals about the evils of "stupid men." What holds it all together is her slinky contralto and shrewd ability to cut and mix '60s R&B and Ronnie Spector Wall of Sound "blues pop" vocals with the ghostly remnants of hip-hop neo-soul's last great hope, Lauryn Hill. Who needs black female singers in the flesh when Winehouse can crank out their sound at the drop of a hat?

Winehouse wouldn't be anywhere, though, without a few crackerjack handlers. Key among them is hipster-producer DJ Mark Ronson, the central creative engine behind the *Black* album concept and the figure who united Winehouse and the Dap-Kings. Considered by some listeners to be the heartbeat of the current retro-soul revival, Brooklyn's Dap-Kings emerged in 2000 as the house band at Daptone Records with an analog sound in an increasingly digital world. Heavy on brass and a crisp, early funk-and-soul percussive beat, the band developed a nostalgia-hungry indie following by reproducing note for note the compositional style of a bygone era. (A word of advice to hipster strivers: leapfrogging backward over hip-hop will always get you cred.) It was music that resuscitated the sound as well as the aura of black culture circa 1964—yet it was played by a predominantly white group of musicians.

Winehouse is something of a departure for the Dap-Kings, who are regularly fronted by 52-year-old African-American vocalist Sharon Jones, perhaps the true heir apparent to James and Ruth Brown alike. With a deeper and more powerful range than Winehouse, Jones has recorded three full-length albums with the Dap-Kings, none of which have moved anywhere near the number of units that Winehouse has. It would be easy to suggest that Winehouse "hijacked" Jones's retro-soul soundtrack, but Winehouse doesn't sound all that much like Jones, whose raw power and propulsive energy is more Godfather of Soul and less girl-group demure. Far removed from Jones's infectious spirit, Winehouse's pseudo-inebriated singing is more like a caricature of *Amos 'n' Andy* meets one of Billie Holiday on heroin.

Last March, *New Yorker* pop critic Sasha Frere-Jones wrote that Winehouse's "inflections and phonemes don't add up to any known style." Her "mush-mouthed" phrasings on tracks such as "You Know I'm No Good" are, he wrote, her "real innovation," a "Winehouse signature" that stresses linguistic distortion and sounds heavy on the wine. This, to some, is the sonic allure of Amy Winehouse: her absolutely inscrutable delivery seemingly sets her apart from the legions of white artists who've hopped on the Don Cornelius soul train to find their niche.

Let's be real. These "mush-mouthed" phrasings are anything but new. Winehouse is drawing on a known style that's a hundred years old, rooted in a tradition of female minstrelsy. Think of the oft-overlooked blues recording pioneer Mamie Smith, the artist who, with songwriter Perry Bradford, laid down the first-ever blues recording by an African-American vocalist, "Crazy Blues," in 1920. Mamie Smith is hardly an iconic figure like Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith. Her rep as "a vaudeville chanteuse" rather than a juke-joint vet all but guarantees her exclusion from the traditional blues canon. But it's this background that enabled Smith to draw on a range of styles crafted in part from watching and listening to white female performers like Sophie Tucker and, eventually, Mae West—white women who, as theater scholar Jayna Brown has written, often learned to "perform blackness" from the women who worked for them. It goes to show that there were plenty of women, black and white, who benefited from the minstrel craze.

So Frere-Jones is right on one count: Winehouse is indeed creating a pastiche of sounds. But this pastiche is a homage to old-school musical traditions, gone but not forgotten. Her rich combination of split vocal stylings recalls Mamie Smith's sly and oscillating phrasings—moving from Northeastern vaudeville intonations in one note to early Southern blues in the next. She's as much a modern-day Billie Holiday as a contemporary Sophie Tucker, the self-proclaimed "Last of the Red Hot Mamas" and an original Jewish "coon-shouter" who borrowed liberally from the singing style of blues pioneer Alberta Hunter and others. Smith and Tucker were women of the theater who dressed elegantly, fronted brass bands

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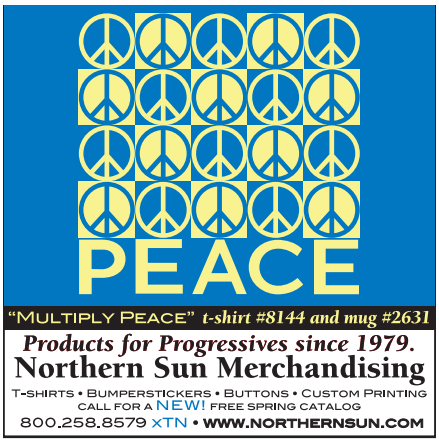
and performed lavish numbers. Though a century removed from Winehouse, these women clearly set a precedent for her high drama on and off the stage.

What, then, is real pop "innovation"? Winehouse has been lauded for essentially throwing Holiday along with Foster Brooks, Louis Armstrong, Wesley Willis, Megan Mullally's Karen on *Will and Grace*, Moms Mabley and Courtney Love into a blender and pressing pulse. And her ability to bring that tricked-out mix of characters to life has made for some eyebrow-raising, highly orchestrated stage shows. Curious to many is Winehouse's use of black male backup dancers and singers, brothers with skinny ties, black mod suits and hats who hustle to choreographed moves, conjuring up images of a bygone era of black male "coolness": Belafonte and Poitier, Nkrumah and Lumumba. Putting this "coolness" in the service of backing up a "ruint" white retro femme figure seems laughable in one sense and egregiously patronizing in another. In either case this sight-gag gimmick is perhaps the key to the obsessions of *Back to Black*.

Whether letting her man know that she'd "rather be at home with Ray" (Charles) than in rehab; hatin' on a suitor for having gotten in the way of her and her "man, Mr. Jones" (*a k a* the New York rapper Nas, Nasir Jones); spitting remorse for having "missed the Slick Rick gig"; or, perhaps most cryptically, telling a confidant that "'side from Sammy, you're my best black Jew," Winehouse may be belting it out like a black woman, but her references and posturings are so, so def, pop-ya-collar, hip-hop machismo, all the way down to her weirdly inverted "you my nigga" bonding reference to Sammy Davis Jr. Witness too how, in her videos, Winehouse rehearses the lowdown "junkie jazz musician" caricature, idling in the bar long after closing time when he should be home with his woman.

To borrow a question from Winehouse herself, "what kind of fuckery is this?" Well beyond merely singing, as a white woman, about her desire for black men, Winehouse, in what is perhaps her real innovation, has created a record about a white woman wanting to be a black man—and an imaginary one at that, stitched together from hip-hop and bebop and juke-joint mythologies. She's a "ride or die chick" from another era, the Jewish English lass who's rolling with the boys, who morphs into the J. Hova gangsta driving the Jag herself. All hail the retro-soul Jolson in a dress who, it seems, is really our first hip-hop drag king, a thug for life indeed, and who clearly, oh, so clearly, these days, seems frighteningly ready to die. ■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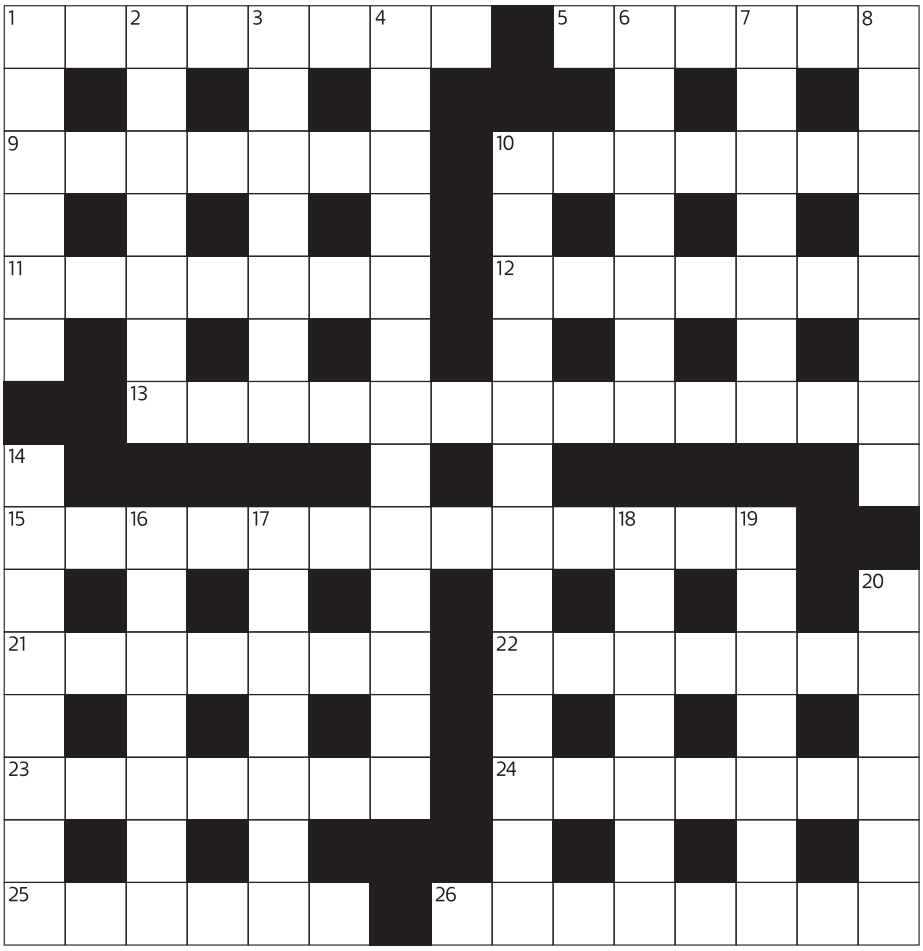

ACROSS

1 and **5** One sometimes does before shaving—with heavy exercise, too. (5,2,1,6)

9 More silly than sweet, sticky stuff on fire, sort of. (7)

10 Began like the actor Little Edward. (7)

11 Forbid its existence *inter alia* for this country. (7)

12 That's what you think! (7)

13 What the electric company has in its favor. (7,6)

15 Guesses a bit high? (4-9)

21 A stout return with an uncertain fate, which proves material. (7)

22 Peerless description of the Frenchman's negative view on a sort of it. (3-4)

23 You might see a worker tip his lid and come out of it. (7)

24 A southern republican puts one in a hat with John in Glasgow. (7)

25 Comparatively right, according to some. (Fasten firmly on the junction!) (6)

26 An awful lot with it, but nothing goes up wrong with the end of silence. (8)

DOWN

1 The home of the brave? (6)

2 Like some equilateral parallelograms. (7)

3 Perhaps the actress who could beat the hide off you! (7)

4 What's washed up on the shore forever might go to her head. (9,4)

6 To tell the truth, he never did! (7)

7 Typified by Uriah with a star performance having a close-fitting sound. (7)

8 E. in a state of undress displays impolite behavior. (8)

10 Suggests the part of the athlete that might get out of joint really defines good behavior on his part. (13)

14 Take advantage of someone and offer him an apple, perhaps—but you should treat the villain with it. (8)

16 Eastern title that makes the point very loud to finish one. (7)

17 Looks over what came from mine, but doesn't look very well. (7)

18 English caricaturist putting a number on the broken line. (7)

19 Possibly a lizard or a crocodile, as it comes up to the old city in around a final part. (7)

20 You might spare the spare with the one with his hand out, or alter the definition. (6)

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M	■	I	■	■	■	■	■	T	■	■	■	U	■	T
A	L	A	M	O	■	S	P	A	■	A	L	T	A	R
T	■	I	■	S	■	A	■	I	■	G	■	R	■	U
T	E	S	T	I	F	Y	■	L	E	E	W	A	R	D
R	■	O	■	E	■	S	■	S	■	N	■	N	■	E
R	U	N	S	R	I	O	T	■	S	T	O	K	E	R

The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2008 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Bleuchip International, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2. Canada Post: Publications Mail Agreement No.: 40612608. When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions. Basic annual subscription price: $52 for 47 issues. Back issues $6 prepaid ($8 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

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From the landmark book Grow Young with HGH comes the most powerful, over-the-counter health supplement in the history of man. Human growth hormone was first discovered in 1920 and has long been thought by the medical community to be necessary only to stimulate the body to full adult size and therefore unnecessary past the age of 20. Recent studies, however, have overturned this notion completely, discovering instead that the natural decline of Human Growth Hormone (HGH), from ages 21 to 61 (the average age at which there is only a trace left in the body) and is the main reason why the the body ages and fails to regenerate itself to its 25 year-old biological age.

Like a picked flower cut from the source, we gradually wilt physically and mentally and become vulnerable to a host of degenerative diseases, that we simply weren't susceptible to in our early adult years.

Modern medical science now regards aging as a disease that is treatable and preventable and that "aging", the disease, is actually acompilation of various diseases and pathologies, from everything, like a rise in blood glucose and pressure to diabetes, skin wrinkling and so on. All of these aging symptoms can be stopped-and rolled back by maintaining Growth Hormone levels in the blood at the same levels HGH existed in the blood when we were 25 years old.

There is a receptor site in almost every cell in the human body for HGH, so its regenerative and healing effects are very comprehensive.

Growth Hormone first synthesized in 1985 under the Reagan Orphan drug act, to treat dwarfism, was quickly recognized to stop aging in its tracks and reverse it to a remarkable degree. Since then, only the lucky and the rich have had access to it at the cost of $20,000 US per year.

Many in hollywood's glamour sets, who never seem to age like you or I, have a special secret to tell, and even space pioneer and US Senator John Glen stays vital with HGH.

The next big breakthrough was to come in 1997 when a group of doctors and scientists, developed an all-natural source product which would cause your own natural HGH to be released again and do all the remarkable things it did for you in your 20's. Now available to every adult for about the price of a coffee and donut a day.

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The new HGH releasers are winning converts-from the synthetic HGH users as well, since GHR is just as effective, is oral instead of self-injectable and is very affordable.

GHR is a natural releaser, has no known side effects, unlike the synthetic version and has no known drug interactions. Progressive doctors admit that this is the direction medicine is seeking to go, to get the body to heal itself instead of employing drugs. GHR is truly a revolutionary paradigm shift in medicine and, like any modern leap frog advance, many others will be left in the dust holding their limited, or useless drugs and remedies.

It is now thought that HGH is so comprehensive in its healing and regenerative powers that it is today, where the computer industry was twenty years ago, that it will displace so many prescription and non-prescription drugs and health remedies that it is staggering to think of.

The president of BIE Health Products stated in a recent interview, I've been waiting for these products since the 70's. We knew they would come, if only we could stay healthy and live long enough to see them! If you want to stay on top of your game, physically and mentally as you age, this product is a boon, especially for the highly skilled professionals who have made large investments in their education, and experience. Also with the failure of Congress to honor our seniors with pharmaceutical coverage policy, it's more important than ever to take pro-active steps to safeguard your health. Continued use of GHR will make a radical difference in your health, HGH is particularly helpful to the elderly who, given a choice, would rather stay independent in their own home, strong healthy and alert enough to manage their own affairs, exercise and stay involved in their communities. Frank, age 85 walks two miles a day, plays golf, belongs to a dance club for seniors, has a girl friend again and doesn't need Viagra, passed his drivers test and is hardly ever home when we call - GHR delivers.

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